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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE PREVENTION OF  
ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION: ALBANIA, BRITAIN,  
FRANCE AND THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF  
MACEDONIA**

by

Ioannis Kagioglidis

September 2009

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David S. Yost  
Daniel J. Moran

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**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE PREVENTION OF ISLAMIC  
RADICALIZATION: ALBANIA, BRITAIN, FRANCE AND THE FORMER  
YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the potential contribution of religious education to preventing Islamic extremism in Albania, Britain, France, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The existence of large Muslim populations in each of these four countries, combined with the fact that a growing number of young Muslims have become members of terrorist networks, constitutes a security threat to the whole Western world. In recent years, several terrorist incidents have taken place in all four of these countries. Governments tend to deal with terrorism by adopting counter-terrorism policies, which necessitate the use of force. This thesis suggests that religious education, if properly formulated as a preventive measure, may counter Islamic extremism effectively. European institutions, such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, have provided a substantial legal framework and general principles on how to establish a constructive and socially beneficial religious education curriculum. If Albania, Britain, France, and FYROM take into account the recommendations provided by these European institutions and implement them along with other positive innovative measures, they may set up an efficient mechanism to prevent Islamic radicalization.



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I dedicate this work to my mother, Sofia Kagioglidou, for her constant support and faith in me.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

At present more than 23 million Muslims are resident in Europe. This number is equivalent to nearly five percent of the total population.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, a growing number of young Muslims become members of terrorist networks, which constitute a security threat to the whole Western world.<sup>2</sup> This thesis investigates the extent to which religious education, when it is part of the religious accommodation that is provided to Muslims by European governments, can contribute to the prevention of Islamic radicalization. The case studies examined in this thesis are Albania, Britain, France, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The study variable, namely religious education policies, presents significant differences among them. These cases are examined in order to investigate the extent to which educational measures can provide effective methods to counter radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations.

### A. IMPORTANCE

In the years since the attacks of 11 September 2001, Islamic terrorism has emerged as an important security threat not only to the United States but to other countries worldwide. Terrorist incidents such as the 11 March 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the 2 November 2004 assassination of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam, and the 7 July 2005 public transport bombings in London indicate that several European countries are among those for which terrorism is a fundamental threat. Islamic terrorism has both a global dimension, represented by transnational organizations such as Al Qaeda, and a local dimension represented by domestic terrorist groups of freshly radicalized Muslim citizens or residents. Even though these two threats are related to each other (and Al Qaeda remains a serious threat for European states), it seems that local groups acting autonomously have become a more immediate danger.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy M. Savage, "Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing," *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2004), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Petter Nesser, *Jihad in Europe: Recruitment for terrorist cells in Europe*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2006, found at: <[http://www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00078/Recruitment-for-terr\\_78247a.pdf](http://www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00078/Recruitment-for-terr_78247a.pdf)>, 3.

As a result, in recent years counterterrorism has emerged as a sector of security policy of great importance. Some experts make a distinction between active and passive measures as means of countering terrorism. Active measures are intended to eliminate a group's potential to organize and commit violent actions, and they necessitate the use of force. On the other hand, passive measures aim at weakening a group's motivation to employ terrorism in the first place and they rely on peaceful strategies. Until now, endangered states have mainly employed active measures, which tend to provide temporary rather than long-term solutions to the problem. Coercive measures against Al Qaeda have restricted its operational capabilities but the organization is still alive and recovering. This suggests that active measures alone are not sufficient to counter the problem as a whole. Decision-makers should apply both active and passive measures in order to deal with Islamic terrorism effectively. If religious education is properly formulated, it can help young people understand and respect different beliefs, practices, races and cultures. If well-formulated religious education is provided by European governments to Muslims, as well as to young people of other faiths, it may help to prevent Islamic radicalization and thus diminish the danger of terrorism.

## **B. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES**

This thesis investigates the hypothesis that religious education can be an effective tool in the passive counterterrorism strategies pursued by the European governments under examination. The hypothesis raises several questions:

- How is Islamic radicalization related to the religious education of Muslims?
- What are the current policies of the governments under examination with respect to the religious education of Muslims?
- What new policies, if any, might be usefully considered for adoption by these governments regarding the religious education of Muslims?

## **C. CATEGORIES OF POTENTIAL RECRUITS TO EXTREMISM**

Today, Muslims constitute the vast majority of immigrants in Europe, as a result of post-World War II guest-worker programs. People from less developed countries were invited to perform the jobs for which Europeans were not available. In recent years, however, radical Islam has spread among some Muslims, and this has contributed to the rise of terrorism in Europe. This raises the question: which Muslims are susceptible to recruitment in terrorist groups?

As noted previously, Muslims comprise nearly five percent of Europe's population and the rate of growth is accelerating because of immigration, conversions to the Islamic religion, and high fertility rates.<sup>3</sup> These reasons suggest that there are three categories of people who may be candidates for recruitment: first, immigrants who still maintain close links with their countries of origin; second, the converts who find in Islam a way to protest against perceived humiliations and affronts; and, third, young second- or third-generation Muslim residents, who feel discriminated against in European societies that do not fully accept them. Many experts judge that radical Islam attracts recruits mainly from the third category. If this assessment is correct, providing proper religious education to Muslims may diminish the risks of Islamic extremism.

### **1. The "Outsiders"**

The first category of people who could be recruited, according to Robert Leiken's typology, might be called "outsiders." The outsiders are first generation immigrants who may be seeking asylum in a Western European country because the political situation is at a critical juncture back in their homeland. They may also be students at European universities, illegal immigrants, or just sojourners.<sup>4</sup> Many Muslim immigrants to Europe come face-to-face with a civilization differentiated from theirs by history, language, culture, tradition and religion. They also have little understanding of the conditions facing

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy M. Savage, "Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing," *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2004), 26.

<sup>4</sup> Robert S. Leiken, "Europe's Immigration Problem, and Ours," *Mediterranean Quarterly* (Fall 2004), 205.



Europe's many Muslim communities. This makes them experience confusion and sometimes leads them to social isolation and an identity crisis. However, only a few are overwhelmed by the sudden change in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

What seems to be most noteworthy in this category of people is their capacity to recruit rather than their susceptibility to recruitment. This is because radical imams are classified in this category. In the United Kingdom, imams come from the same general sources of Muslim immigration, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. They also do not speak English or have any knowledge of British society.<sup>6</sup> Certain imams, experts report, either participate actively in the process of recruitment or open their mosques to terrorist recruiters while they serve as messengers or spiritual fathers to jihadist networks.

According to the historical tradition of Islam, Muslim religious leaders living in a non-Muslim world are obliged to proselytize for Islam in conformity with the hijra doctrine. The hijra is perhaps the most important event in Islamic history. It was the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers in 622 A.D. from Mecca to Medina, where they founded the first Islamic state. In Medina Muhammad established the theoretical principles of Islam and put them into practice for the first time. From this transition from Mecca to Medina stems the hijra doctrine, which has been used subsequently by Islamic movements to describe a transformation, a new development, and a new beginning. Accordingly, the process of migrating and establishing a Muslim community in a non-Muslim area can be described as a hijra.

Muslims hold that any space gained for Islam is sacred and should belong to a community with a purely Muslim identity.<sup>7</sup> Therefore all non-believers should be proselytized in order to bring them into this community. When addressing non-believers, Muslim clerics usually rely on a discourse different from the one they use when

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Taarnby, "Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe. Trends and Perspectives," Centre of Cultural Research, University of Aarhus (January 2005), 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>7</sup> Jabal Buaben, "What makes a Good City? A Muslim Perspective," found in Web site at: <<http://www.faithsforthecity.org.uk/Papers/Islam.pdf>>.

addressing Muslims. This approach obscures their efforts to radicalize and at the same time makes it difficult for inquiring experts or journalists to gather information about their activities. European governments have exhibited a tolerant attitude toward the proselytizing methods of Muslims. This tolerance and the indifference of most of the public have made the efforts of Islamic recruiters of potential terrorists even more systematic. A well-known example of a mosque with a history of radicalization and recruitment for jihad is the one located in Finsbury Park in London. Its leader since 1996, Abu Hamza Al-Masri, has been distributing Islamist propaganda as a means for radicalization. He has sold visual material with graphic combat scenes and has been an agent of sending young Muslims to jihadist training camps.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. The “Converts”**

The second category of people who may be susceptible to recruitment, the converts, may in some cases be victims of societal marginalization. Disaffected and troubled young people sometimes see the current wave of Islamic terrorism as a fight against injustice, infidelity, power and money. However, there is no single profile that characterizes individuals of this category. Although no official statistics about converts participating in terrorist actions appear to be available, the results of a Nixon Institute survey deserve consideration. According to this survey, “out of 279 suspected and convicted terrorists who resided in or transited through North America and Western Europe between the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and December 2003, about 86 percent were Muslim immigrants, the remainder being mainly converts (eight percent) and African American Muslims.”<sup>9</sup>

Some experts hold that converts who eventually take up jihad are not motivated by theology but rather by a search for a purpose and an identity. According to Olivier Roy, “To convert to Islam today is a way for a European rebel to find a cause.” Roy suggests that such people twenty years ago would have embraced a radical leftist

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<sup>8</sup> Jabal Buaben, “What makes a Good City? A Muslim Perspective,” found in Web site at: <<http://www.faithsforthecity.org.uk/Papers/Islam.pdf>>.

<sup>9</sup> Robert S. Leiken, “Europe’s Immigration Problem, and Ours,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* (Fall 2004), 206.

movement, but today are attracted to Islamism as a vehicle for fighting the system.<sup>10</sup> In some cases, their choice is closely connected with the Iraq conflict, which they perceive as a Western plot to control oil resources in the Middle East. In addition to influencing the sentiments of European Muslims because of the perceived repression of Muslim populations, the Iraq war evoked anti-Western sentiments among Europeans who considered it an unjustified war, and this may have contributed to their conversion to Islam.

From a sociological perspective, these individuals do not possess the cultural or religious background to resist radical interpretations of Islam, so they are much more susceptible to persuasion about the obligations of jihad. What prevails in their minds is a romanticized notion of a fight between oppressed Islam and the unjust West.<sup>11</sup> According to anti-terrorism officials, converts have been used in the past for proselytism, logistics or support but now they are also ready to be used actively in terrorist operations. This new terrorist recruitment strategy is intended to benefit from the probability that the newly recruited terrorist's physical appearance will arouse less suspicion in the eyes of European police forces who are looking for a specific physiognomy, that is, a Middle Eastern appearance. Moreover, according to anti-terrorist officials, a remarkable number of these converts are women. This complicates even more attempts to rely on an "expected" terrorist profile. The physical appearance enables them to cross national borders without thorough inspections. They can, therefore, serve as front men (or women) for renting accommodations and providing several kinds of logistical support.<sup>12</sup> National European police forces have already arrested a handful of converts on charges of terrorism activity; and they are now focusing on this subset as a potentially growing threat, despite the small number of converts under suspicion.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Olivier Roy, "Euroislam: the Jihad within," *The National Interest*, March 23, 2003, at: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2751/is\\_2003\\_Spring/ai\\_99377576/pg\\_6-48k\\_-](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2751/is_2003_Spring/ai_99377576/pg_6-48k_-).

<sup>11</sup> Craig S. Smith, "Europe Fears Islamic Converts May Give Cover for Extremism," *The New York Times*, 19 July 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse, *Integrating Islam, Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2006), 250.

<sup>13</sup> Craig S. Smith, "Europe Fears Islamic Converts May Give Cover for Extremism," *The New York Times*, 19 July 2004.

Conversion often happens in prisons or mosques. The Islamic population has been increasing at high rates in Europe's prisons. In British prisons, eight percent of the inmates are of Muslim origin, although Muslims account for only three percent of the total population.<sup>14</sup> Inevitably prisoners come into contact with already radicalized individuals and are exposed to extremist Islamic ideologies. Occasionally they embrace jihadist obligations in order to compensate for previous sentiments of idleness and lacking a clear purpose in life. Conversions in mosques sometimes stem from the combination of societal marginalization and rigorous proselytization.

### **3. The "Insiders"**

The third category of people susceptible to recruitment consists (according to Robert Leiken's typology) of "insiders." According to his definition, insiders "are a group of alienated citizens, second—or third—generation children of immigrants who were born and bred under European liberalism."<sup>15</sup> Taking into account the fact that the Muslim population has in Europe more than doubled in the last thirty years and that the rate of growth is accelerating, it is not surprising that "insiders" constitute the main pool for recruitment to jihadist terrorism. First generation Muslims do not belong in this category, probably because they initially viewed their stay in Europe as temporary. Living in impoverished conditions, they had no time for complaining about unsatisfactory social accommodation. Eventually a large percentage of these first generation immigrants decided to stay in Europe permanently and brought their families as well.

However, the children and grandchildren of this first generation seem to be less integrated into West European societies than immigrants from Eastern Europe. Their educational achievements and skill levels are lower than those of most citizens. Muslim women rarely work outside the home, and their opportunities for advancement are limited. The unemployment rate among Muslims is almost double that of non-Muslims. All the above factors contribute to the isolation and self-encapsulation of Muslim youth.

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<sup>14</sup> Barbara Franz, "Europe's Muslim Youth: An Inquiry into the Politics of Discrimination, Relative Deprivation, and Identity Formation," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, (Winter 2007), 98.

<sup>15</sup> Robert S. Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, (July/ August 2005), 127.

Moreover, despite having grown up in Europe, they experience a cultural shock and feel repulsed by European societies' secularism and materialism.<sup>16</sup> Many of the young men turn to Islam as a form of protest against these social and economic difficulties.<sup>17</sup> The first stage of their radicalization is brainwashing by a radical imam. The latter may participate in terrorist recruitment himself or provide the contact to another recruiter.<sup>18</sup>

#### **4. Conclusions on the Three Categories of Potential Recruits to Extremism**

Even though this thesis does not intend to examine all sources of radicalization, it is important to summarize some of the key potentially radicalizing factors. Socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion, and lack of opportunity certainly play a significant role in this process. They are accompanied by the process of globalization not just on an economic level but also on political, social, and cultural levels. The globalization process is seen as a deliberate attempt to replace traditional Islamic structures with Western models for the sake of Westernization and modernization. Combined with the secularism and materialism that are characteristic of Western societies, this process of Westernization inflicts a cultural shock upon Muslims. Moreover, specific events, such as the intervention in Afghanistan authorized by the United Nations Security Council in order to remove Al Qaeda and the US-led intervention in Iraq, are portrayed as attacks against Islam itself.

These factors affect all of the three aforementioned categories of Muslims. However, the case of second and third generation Muslims in Europe is of specific interest because they do not maintain links with their familial countries of origin. Such links could at least provide them with a non-religious source of personal identity. The refusal to assimilate into Western societies, owing to the secularism and superficial materialism of these societies, results in a gap in identity and a search for an imagined

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<sup>16</sup> Timothy M. Savage, "Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing," *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2004), 33.

<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, "Jihad from Europe," *Journal of International Security Affairs* (September 2005), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Taarnby, "Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe. Trends and Perspectives," Centre of Cultural Research, University of Aarhus (January 2005), 33.

community to fill it. Eventually—at least in some cases—this gap is filled by neo-fundamentalism.<sup>19</sup> The process of radicalization needs a vehicle to drive the potential victims from disapproval of the status quo to real action. This vehicle is exposure to radical ideas, and this can occur in several ways. In its most simplistic form, it may come from reading radical Islamic literature or consulting the Internet websites, which project radical views. Most importantly, however, radicalization seems to arise from interactions with people who are already radicalized, especially when these people are charismatic and effective in presenting and conveying their beliefs. Such individuals can be most readily found in mosques. Imams from outside Europe who are already committed to extremism may be the ideal recruiters. Moreover, the common denominator in all three categories of Muslims susceptible to recruitment is that in most cases the recruitment takes place in a mosque.

These circumstances help to explain why this thesis focuses on religious education as a key factor in enabling young people to resist radicalization efforts by extremist religious leaders.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The scholarly literature on this topic is abundant, and it involves some controversy. This review of the literature concentrates on the works that provide an indispensable overview of the main features of the diverse approaches to religious education in Europe, including efforts designed to discourage radicalization and to promote tolerance and mutual respect and understanding.

The member nations of the European Union and the Council of Europe have in recent years been cooperating more closely in political, social and economic terms. This means that they are bound to some extent to pursue common policies in order to deal with their common problems. Recent terrorist incidents in Europe indicate that terrorism is one of the serious common issues that they have to deal with. Moreover, it has been observed that in the past decade religion has been given special attention as a result of the 11

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<sup>19</sup> Olivier Roy, “Euroislam: the Jihad within,” *The National Interest* Inc, 2003, at: <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2751/is\\_2003\\_Spring/ai\\_99377576/pg\\_6-48k-](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2751/is_2003_Spring/ai_99377576/pg_6-48k-)>, 5.

September 2001 terrorist attacks. These events highlighted the Western world's ignorance of Islam and the need to develop a more informed view of religious diversity.<sup>20</sup> From 2002 to 2005, the Council of Europe was engaged in a project entitled "The Challenge of Intercultural Education Today: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe." As John Keast has noted, this project signifies the important role that religious education can play in understanding people of other faiths and thus promoting tolerance among them.<sup>21</sup>

Today, religious education reflects the great diversity among the European nations. This diversity stems from each country's historical complexities and differences in languages, traditions and cultures. As a result of the above factors, religious education has been developed and provided in different ways. This stems in part from who has had the responsibility for such education. The state and religious communities are the main actors in the issue of religion and schooling.<sup>22</sup> The extent to which each of these actors is involved determines the model of religious education provided in schools.

Experts have provided several schemas on how European countries can be grouped according to the model of religious education they provide. For example, they can be grouped in three categories: 1) no religious instruction at schools; 2) confessional religious instruction; 3) non-confessional religious education.<sup>23</sup> Of the four countries examined in this thesis, France is the only country that belongs in the first category, since the state does not allow the provision of religious education in public schools. In the confessional model the state approves the religions that may be taught, and pays the teachers' salaries. Religious instruction is a responsibility of religious communities. They

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<sup>20</sup> Suzanne Rosenblith and Bea Bailey, "Comprehensive Religious Studies in Public Education: Educating for a Religiously Literate Society," *Educational studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, (September 2007), 101.

<sup>21</sup> John Keast, *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools* (Council of Europe Publishing, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR Conference On "The Role of Freedom of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism," Baku, Azerbaijan, 10–11 October 2002, found in Web site at: <<http://www.osce.org/search/?a=1&limit=10&res=html&d=0&lsi=1&go-2=Search...1...-14k>>, 65.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, "Different Models for Religion and Education in Europe," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 60.

are expected to select and train teachers, to design the curricula, and to decide what material is to be taught. In some cases, the state and religious communities cooperate with each other in order to deal with these issues. In most of the countries that apply a confessional model, religious instruction is an optional course, while in the cases where it is mandatory students are allowed to be excused. Several Northern, Eastern and Central European countries (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain) belong to this category.<sup>24</sup> In non-confessional systems, the state has almost absolute control of religious education, and no religion is given special emphasis over the others. It is the state's responsibility to select, train and pay the teachers, draft the curricula and choose the material to be taught. In some cases, the last task is implemented with the cooperation of religious bodies. Religious instruction is mandatory, but students may be excused. Northern European countries (e.g., Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) belong to this category.<sup>25</sup>

There are several other schemas describing the varieties of religious education models in Europe. Some are simpler than the ones described above: for example, the pluralistic integration model (e.g., France) and the confessional segregation model,<sup>26</sup> and some involve more elaborate schemas, such as “mixed systems,” besides the confessional and the non-confessional models. Mixed systems distinguish England and Wales from the non-confessional model because, besides the state-funded public schools that provide a pluralistic and multifaith education, the state funds private faith schools that promote specific confessions.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, “Different Models for Religion and Education in Europe,” in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 60.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 61–62.

<sup>26</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR Conference On “The Role of Freedom of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism,” Baku, Azerbaijan, 10–11 October 2002, found in Web site at: <<http://www.osce.org/search/?a=1&limit=10&res=html&d=0&lsi=1&go-2=Search...1...-14k->>>, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Jackson, “European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship,” in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 29.



This brings up the issue of how private religious schools are treated by the state. Practices with regard to the right to establish such a school vary across European countries. In some cases, states apply strict policies against their establishment while in other cases they provide funds to religious communities in order to operate them. There are also variations on how strongly state intervention is applied with regard to the content of the curricula provided by the religious communities.<sup>28</sup> Religious schools, and especially those of the Christian faith, are generally popular in Europe because of their high academic standards.

Distinctions regarding religious education are also made according to the aims of the subject. Robert Jackson, for example, has distinguished among educating into, about and from religion.<sup>29</sup> Educating into religion means that a single tradition is taught in order for the students to strengthen their ties to that religion. Typically religious communities have the responsibility to design the curricula and train the teachers. Educating about religion does not seek to foster religious belief. It is focused on learning about the beliefs, values and practices of a religion from a descriptive and historical approach. It also intends to clarify how religion influences the behavior of believers and plays a role in shaping communities. Finally, educating from religion aims to prepare students to evaluate different perspectives on religious and moral issues, thus enabling them to develop their personal views in a reflective way.<sup>30</sup>

Jackson has also identified three geographical areas in Europe that reflect the continent's diverse religious history. Northern Europe has been influenced by Protestantism and southern Europe mainly by Catholicism, while in Eastern European states religion (mainly Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity) has reemerged since the

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<sup>28</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR Conference On "The Role of Freedom of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism," Baku, Azerbaijan, 10–11 October 2002, found in Web site at: <<http://www.osce.org/search/?a=1&limit=10&res=html&d=0&lsi=1&go-2=Search...1...-14k->>, 65.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Jackson, "European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 29.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

fall of communism.<sup>31</sup> As Peter Schreiner has observed, in the latter region belong also some of the Balkan states. In the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars, religious education became an issue of high controversy, because in these countries religion and culture have always been associated with national identity and history. Moreover, during the communist era religions were suppressed, which meant that parents who wanted to educate their children in a religious manner had to do so secretly. This experience led Balkan peoples to distrust public education in religion.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the many different ways religious education is treated, European nations have to deal with several similar challenges. According to Jean-Paul Willaime, secularization, the rise of atheism, the lack of contact by young people with religious practices, the existence of large Muslim populations in some states, the lack of knowledge about the beliefs of others, anti-semitism and Islamophobia are among the challenges that Europeans are trying to address by altering their approach to providing religious education.<sup>33</sup> It is generally agreed, as noted previously, that religious education can play an important role in promoting tolerance among people of different faiths. Several strategies have been proposed to this end. A culture of tolerance presupposes that people are aware of other peoples' religions and worldviews, even those of a secular nature. Students can be taught about these issues in a specific course, as part of a history or civics course.<sup>34</sup> Students should also learn to respect freedom of religion and the rights of others, which means that education about human rights should be included in school

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Jackson, "European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Schreiner, "Religious Education in Europe," Oslo University, 8 September 2005, found in Web site at: <<http://resources.eun.org/etwinning/europa2.pdf>>, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, "Different Models for Religion and Education in Europe," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 59.

<sup>34</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR Conference On "The Role of Freedom of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism," Baku, Azerbaijan, 10–11 October 2002, found in Web site at: <<http://www.osce.org/search/?a=1&limit=10&res=html&d=0&lsi=1&go-2=Search...1...-14k->>, 61.

curricula.<sup>35</sup> Another important strategy is to develop interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Relevant studies have proven that religions share some common values. Teaching these values may contribute to respect for human rights.<sup>36</sup>

Basic human rights declarations and conventions refer to freedom of religion and belief and provide that children shall enjoy the right to have access to religious education in accordance with the wishes of their parents. This principle restrains states in determining the content of religious teachings and confronts them with the challenge to strike a balance between promoting tolerance and accommodating the parents' rights to decide on their children's religious education.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, all the above strategies are dependent on the capability of educators to implement them. This means that they should be able to adapt and advance their own knowledge in order to provide for the students' needs. It also means that states should be able to provide the proper training to them. Rosemary Walters has examined several studies that deal with how teachers can acquire knowledge and develop communicative strategies in order to encourage constructive classroom dialogue. Religious education teachers can find appropriate resources, especially on the internet, and in particular those that emphasize sociological rather than theological principles.<sup>38</sup>

Intercultural education for tolerance is often associated with peace education. In the words of a Council of Europe document, "The culture of peace is considered to resist violence through the promotion of human freedom and dignity, equality and respect for life and by introducing the learner to non-violent strategies, dialogue, mediation and non-prejudiced perception of others."<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, religious and peace education are both

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<sup>35</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR Conference On "The Role of Freedom of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism," Baku, Azerbaijan, 10–11 October 2002, found in Web site at: <<http://www.osce.org/search/?a=1&limit=10&res=html&d=0&lsi=1&go-2=Search...1...-14k>>, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>38</sup> Rosemary Walters, "Identity and Impact. The Creative Use of out of School Resources with Religious Education Student Teachers," Autumn 2005, found in Web site at: <<http://www.re-net.ac.uk>>.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Jackson and Satoko Fujiwara, "Towards Religious Education for Peace," British Journal of Religious Education, Vol. 29, No.1, (January 2007), 2–4.

associated with citizenship education. According to a Council of Europe project in Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), citizenship education includes human rights education, civic education, peace education, global education and intercultural education.<sup>40</sup> Citizenship education is of increasing importance for European governments, and it is provided in schools as a separate course, as part of other courses along with religious education, or as a cross-curricular subject.<sup>41</sup>

Overall, it is clear that European countries place increasing importance on the role of religious education as an element in preparing students for responsible citizenship in pluralist societies.

## **E. METHODS AND SOURCES**

The methodology employed in this thesis is a comparative case study analysis. The study cases examined are Albania, Britain, France and the FYROM. The study variable is the policies of these governments for the religious education of Muslims.

The study cases were chosen to represent two groups of states that present different political and socio-cultural characteristics. The first group, which consists of the Western European states, is represented by France and Britain. These states have long-standing democratic political structures, with an extended history of law and policy-making, and they are members of the European Union. Moreover, citizens of these countries share Western values and beliefs. The second group, comprised of the Western Balkan states, is represented by Albania and the FYROM. These states are recently established constitutional democracies, and in recent years they have been continuously introducing legislation in order to enhance the implementation of their constitutional objectives. They both aspire to EU membership. The somewhat artificial dichotomy suggested by this thesis, between Western European states with a long history of law-making and Western Balkan states with less experience in legislating but with the

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Jackson, "European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 30.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 31

potential to contribute innovative policy suggestions, is intended to provide useful insights in terms of policy recommendations. The thesis analyzes the policy options through a comparison of the four case studies. Moreover, other innovative measures with regard to religious education are suggested and examined in order to determine the extent to which they can contribute to countering Islamic radicalization.

For its data, this thesis relies mainly on books, academic studies recorded in journals, national statistics and other publications. In addition, this thesis consults official documents of all the governments under examination in order to investigate their current policies regarding religious education. Taking into account the international implications of the problem, this study also investigates the major European institutions' policies concerning religious education and counter-radicalization through the existing documentation in the European Union, Council of Europe, and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe frameworks.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis is organized as follows. Following the introduction, four chapters are devoted to the four study cases, namely Albania, Britain, France, and the FYROM. The organizational structure of these four chapters is identical in order to address the key issues in a systematic comparison. First of all, the thesis examines the historical background of Islam in each case, including the circumstances under which Muslim communities were established in each country. Second, this study considers Islamic extremism by reviewing the incidents of terrorism in each of the cases. It also establishes the connection between Islamic radicalization and the religious education of Muslims. Finally, it investigates current governmental policies with respect to religious education and considers the extent to which they are applied to religious communities and Muslim communities in particular. In the concluding chapter, the thesis compares these policies and offers recommendations as to how to prevent Islamic radicalization.

## II. CASE STUDY OF ALBANIA

### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM IN ALBANIA

Albania today, 2.3 million Muslims comprise approximately 71 per cent of the total population of 3.3 million. The rest of the population is of Christian faith, mainly either Orthodox or Catholic, with a much smaller proportion Protestant. There is a further distinction between Sunni Muslims (55 per cent of the total population) and Bektashi Muslims (16 per cent of the Albanian people).<sup>42</sup> The latter have historically supported Shiite retaliation against Sunni Ottoman power, but they are religiously tolerant towards the non-Muslim faiths. Bektashi believers do not observe conventional Islamic rules, such as abstaining from alcohol and requiring women to wear scarves, in their everyday life, and they reside mostly in rural areas. In contrast, Sunni Muslims are present in towns and cities, and they generally promote a much stricter interpretation of Islam than the Bektashis do.<sup>43</sup>

In antiquity, the territory of modern-day Albania was inhabited by Illyrian pagan tribes, and with time they evolved into larger entities. Following the Roman invasion in 168 A.D., the Illyrians underwent a cultural transformation to become the new Albanian population. At the same time they converted to Christianity. Because of the religious schism of 1054 A.D., which split Christianity into Eastern and Western churches, Albania was divided into a Catholic north and an Orthodox south.<sup>44</sup> Albania's location at the juncture of the eastern and the western worlds provided a fertile ground for religious clashes. As a result many religious phenomena, such as apostasies, conversions, proselytism and heresies took place in the following centuries.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Antonia Young, "Religion and Society in Present-Day Albania," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol.14, No.1, 1999, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Miranda Vickers, "Islam in Albania," Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (March 2008), 3.

<sup>44</sup> Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians. A Modern History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 1–3.

<sup>45</sup> Gjergj Sinani, "Historical and Legal Aspects of Religion in Albania," in Silvo Devetak, Liana Kalcina and Miroslav F. Polzer, eds., "Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in South—Eastern Europe," ISCOMET —Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, 2004, 38.

There is no evidence of any Muslim presence in Albania before the occupation by the Ottoman Empire in 1385. Under Ottoman rule almost two-thirds of the population converted to Islam. This was a rather slow process that took place during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> Albanians converted to Islam in order to avoid taxation and to attain positions in the empire's administration or the military. Through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries churches were gradually replaced by mosques.<sup>47</sup> According to some scholars, the Turks spread Islam by violent means. For example, following the 1645 Turko-Venetian War, in which Albanian Catholics supported their Italian co-religionists, forced conversions took place as a means of reprisal. This was also the case with the conversions of allies of the Orthodox Russians after the 1768 Russo-Turkish war.<sup>48</sup>

In 1912, Albania became an independent state. Until the Second World War freedom to practice religion was guaranteed, without an official religion recognised. From 1946 to 1992, when the country was governed by a communist regime, every form of religious practice was banned. The government believed that religion was a divisive force that served the interests of Italy (Roman Catholicism), Greece and Serbia (Orthodoxy), and Turkey (Islam). The division of the population among three religions made it impossible for institutionalized religion to fight against all the anti-religious legislation imposed by the communist regime.<sup>49</sup> Islam proved to be the most vulnerable to state intervention since it was less organized than the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Moreover, the fact that the Bektashi sect was not formally recognised exacerbated the antagonistic relations between Bektashi and Sunni Muslims.<sup>50</sup>

The abolition of religion was a gradual process. It was initiated with the 1945 land reform law, which deprived religious organizations of their property. It was followed by a

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<sup>46</sup> Gjergj Sinani, "Historical and Legal Aspects of Religion in Albania," in Silvo Devetak, Liana Kalcina and Miroslav F. Polzer, eds., "Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in South—Eastern Europe," ISCOMET —Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, 2004, 48.

<sup>47</sup> Antonia Young, "Religion and Society in Present-Day Albania," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol.14, No.1, 1999, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London, New York: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 42–43.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 44–45.

<sup>50</sup> Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London, New York: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 44.

1949 law that required religious communities to be loyal to the People's Republic of Albania.<sup>51</sup> In the process, 1,200 mosques (along with the places of worship of other faiths) were destroyed, land and property owned by religious institutions were confiscated, and the clerics of all faiths were mistreated.<sup>52</sup> In 1967, laws were introduced that prohibited any religious rites, and with the Constitution of 1976 religious activities were severely punished, even with death. By that time, Albania was considered an extreme example of an atheist state. Even though Albanians in their public lives followed the regime's lines with regard to religion, in their private lives they secretly kept their religious traditions alive, a practice known as crypto-atheism.<sup>53</sup>

Since the fall of the communist regime in 1990, religion has been gradually reintroduced among the Albanians. At the Second Balkan Foreign Ministers' Conference held in Tirana in October 1990, Albania signed a declaration on human rights, including freedom of religion. Gradually, all three faiths (Catholicism, Islam, and Orthodoxy) re-established religious organizations and started public observances legally.<sup>54</sup> Until a new legal framework was introduced, several religious groups sent representatives to Albania in order to proselytize for their faiths.<sup>55</sup> Among them, Wahhabi and Salafi fundamentalist groups tried to indoctrinate confused young Muslims. Their purpose was to persuade young Albanians to abandon a national Islam in the name of a universal one, which would fight against Western values. However, in the years that followed many Muslims—mostly young people—converted to Christianity, either Catholicism or Orthodoxy, in order to be allowed to pursue education in Italy or employment in Greece.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London, New York: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 44.

<sup>52</sup> Miranda Vickers, "Islam in Albania," Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (March 2008), 2.

<sup>53</sup> Derek Hall, *Albania and the Albanians* (London, New York: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994), 42–45.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>55</sup> Antonia Young, "Religion and Society in Present-Day Albania," *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol.14, No.1, 1999, 9–11.

<sup>56</sup> Artan Fuga, "How Church and Mosque Influence the Media of Albania," *International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, Diogenes 2006; 53;50, 53.



## B. ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN ALBANIA

The first president elected after the communist period was President Sali Berisha. His right-wing Democratic Party used an anti-Communist platform and tried to appeal especially to Albanian Sunni Muslims. Berisha was supported by the United States, and following his election in March 1992 he tried to retain strong ties with the United States and NATO.<sup>57</sup> The two main issues Berisha was occupied with were the restoration of Albania's weak economy and the promotion of the concept of “greater Albania.” According to this old concept (initially raised by the “Albanian League,” which was established in Prizeren, Kosovo, in 1878), the Albanians should aspire to unite all the lands of the Balkans inhabited by Albanians.<sup>58</sup>

With regard to the economy, the Albanian government was disappointed with the failure of the West to fulfil its investment promises. Moreover, as mentioned above, during the communist era almost all places of worship were destroyed, and religious leaders were persecuted or even killed. As a result, because of the re-emergence of religion in Albanian life, believers of all faiths faced a great difficulty in practicing religion. Essentially, this meant that they needed money to rebuild mosques and churches and to pay the salaries of their religious leaders. Both these factors—that is, Western failures to invest, and religious needs—contributed to Berisha's decision to open the gates to the Islamic world in search of funds.<sup>59</sup> In 1992, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) offered bank investment for agriculture, transport, Arabic-language training and scholarships for young Albanians to study abroad in Islamic states. In the same year Albania joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).<sup>60</sup>

The decision to become a member of the OIC allowed a whole new Muslim educational and clerical infrastructure to emerge in Albanian society. Moreover, by 1994,

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<sup>57</sup> Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate. The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Westport, Connecticut—London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 29–30.

<sup>58</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 95–97.

<sup>59</sup> Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate. The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Westport, Connecticut—London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

several Saudi and Kuwaiti companies were making substantial investments in Albania. The Arab-Albanian Islamic Bank, founded in 1994, provided funds for the construction of mosques, gave scholarships for Islamic religious studies abroad, and even paid Albanians to persuade the females of the family to wear the chador (a veiled outer garment). In this sense the bank became a propaganda instrument of the Saudi Wahhabis.

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After a while, the rapid construction of the mosques has resulted in a lack of imams to staff all the necessary positions. This gap has been filled by the young Albanians who have studied abroad and returned to Albania. These new clerics, who have been indoctrinated in a stricter form of Islam, have demanded the radicalization of Islam in Albania. This has resulted in religious clashes with older Albanian Muslims who embrace a moderate form of Islam and who consider the young radicalized people potential terrorists.<sup>62</sup>

Among the Islamic organizations that entered Albania in the post-communist era were Islamic terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. They presented themselves as commercial companies and, in exchange for comparatively small investments, they were given the time and opportunity to organize their terrorist infrastructure.<sup>63</sup> Osama bin Laden visited Albania in 1994 as a Saudi businessman who wanted to offer humanitarian support. He funded the Al Haramain organization and his charities were mainly used for proselytizing, money laundering, and giving shelter to mujahedin and Arabs persecuted by their governments.<sup>64</sup>

During the late 1990s, Albania suffered from political and economic instability. This caused social unrest that peaked in riots, and the Albanian government was unable to react effectively. During these events, many guns, rounds of ammunition, and

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<sup>61</sup> Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate. The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Westport, Connecticut—London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 30.

<sup>62</sup> Miranda Vickers, "Islam in Albania," Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (March 2008), 4–5.

<sup>63</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 97.

<sup>64</sup> Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate. The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Westport, Connecticut—London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 31.

explosives were stolen from the police munitions stores. Many of these weapons, as well as 100,000 blank Albanian passports, ended up in the hands of terrorists, as well as combatants of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).<sup>65</sup>

The KLA was founded in 1995–1996. The majority of its founders came from radicalized ethnic Albanian Muslims from Kosovo and the entire ethnic Albanian community worldwide. Inspired by the war in Bosnia and the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which granted autonomy to the Bosniaks, the KLA undertook an armed struggle in order to promote Kosovo's independence from Serbia.<sup>66</sup> Initially, the KLA demanded that Kosovo be granted the status of an independent republic in the Yugoslav Federation. Following Serbia's refusal to satisfy its demands, the KLA aspired to the establishment of an Islamic state, which would include all the Albanian-speaking populations of the Balkans. In the words of the KLA spokesman, Jakup Krasniki: “We want more than independence—the reunification of all Albanians of the Balkans.”<sup>67</sup> During the course of the war it was found that several mujahedin from abroad, such as Afghans, Algerians, Egyptians and Bosnian Muslims, offered their services as KLA volunteers.

Several thousand mujahedin had previously participated in the Bosnian war. Some of these fighters were Arab Wahhabi volunteers who wanted to transform the Bosnian struggle for independence into a terroristic jihad despite the fact that the majority of Bosniaks did not want this. Following the end of this war with the 1995 Dayton settlement, they found a new field of action in the Albanian-speaking lands. Subsequently, they infiltrated the more remote Albanian towns and villages in order to preach their jihadist ideology.<sup>68</sup>

Young Albanians who received a radicalized Islamic education in foreign Islamic universities, Wahhabi fighters who settled in Albania in the aftermath of the Balkan wars, and “outsiders” who poured into the country with the support of the already established

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<sup>65</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 98.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–81.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen Schwartz, “The Struggle Within Islam: Albanian Muslims Reject Extremism,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 1, Is. 11 (February, 2004), 11.

Islamic organizations have strived to create an Islamic political movement in Albania. However, the Albanian Muslim society –both Sunni and Bektashi– has always advocated a rather moderate form of Islam and retained a tolerant stance towards other faiths. Thus, the aforementioned Islamic political movement has not succeeded in winning over the Muslim masses in Albania. It is nevertheless a fact that the seeds of Islamic extremism exist in Albania, and this constitutes a threat to Albania's social stability and a potential terrorism threat for the rest of the world.

### **C. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ALBANIA**

The main provisions concerning religious laws are found in the Albanian Constitution approved in 1998. The Constitution provides for the free practice of religion and regulates the relations between the State and religious communities.<sup>69</sup> One of the most important articles of the Constitution, Article 10, provides that there is no official religion in the Republic of Albania. Moreover, it provides that the state and the religious communities mutually respect each other's independence and work together for the good of all. Furthermore, religious communities have the status of legal persons, which means that they have the right to own and manage their property without the government's interference.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, some of them have already benefited from the process of restitution and compensation for property that was confiscated by the communist regime. However, due to the principle of separation between the state and the religious communities, the government has no obligation to provide funds to religious institutions.<sup>71</sup> So, even though Albanian law permits the construction of places of worship, the financing of such buildings by the state is prohibited. This has resulted in

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<sup>69</sup> Evis Karandrea, "Church and State in Albania" in Silvio Ferrari, W.Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 27.

<sup>70</sup> Silvo Devetak, Liana Kalcina and Miroslav F. Polzer, eds., "Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in South—Eastern Europe," *ISCOMET—Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies*, 2004, 198.

<sup>71</sup> Evis Karandrea, "Church and State in Albania" in Silvio Ferrari, W.Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 31.

foreign Islamic organisations taking control by funding the construction of most of the 500 currently existing mosques.<sup>72</sup>

Besides the Constitution, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania (which entered into force in 1995) also provides for the protection of religious rights. Articles 131 and 133 prohibit obstructing the activities of religious organizations, such as religious ceremonies, and Article 132 prohibits ruining or damaging places of worship.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, it was considered important that the main constitutional provisions with regard to religion be further elaborated and implemented with a law on the religious communities.<sup>74</sup> The Albanian government, with the cooperation of the religious communities, has prepared the Draft Law on Religious Communities, which functions as a basis for discussions among them.

The draft law deals with some important previously unresolved issues, such as the definition of the terms “religious community” and “religious association.” Specifically, according to Article 11: “The religious communities are made up by the people who belong to the same religion or belief,” and, according to Article 12: “Religious associations are voluntary social unions of the people united under the same religion or belief, statute and program.”<sup>75</sup> The draft law safeguards the fundamental religious right to teach and educate on religion or beliefs in places that are suitable for this purpose (Article 2). Accordingly, it provides for the right of the religious communities and associations to construct and use buildings and temples, as well as to establish institutions to ensure the education of their religious personnel (Articles 16 and 17). Moreover, they have the right to build, establish and manage their schools in accordance with the provisions on

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<sup>72</sup> Miranda Vickers, “Islam in Albania,” *Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom* (March 2008), 2.

<sup>73</sup> Silvo Devetak, Liana Kalcina and Miroslav F. Polzer, eds., “Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in South—Eastern Europe,” *ISCOMET—Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies*, 2004, 200.

<sup>74</sup> Evis Karandrea, “Church and State in Albania,” in Silvio Ferrari, W. Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Peeters Publishers, 2003), 28.

<sup>75</sup> Silvo Devetak, Liana Kalcina and Miroslav F. Polzer, eds., “Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in South—Eastern Europe,” *ISCOMET—Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies*, 2004, 204.

education (Article 17). Financial assistance and other contributions from juridical and physical persons, native or foreign, are allowed.<sup>76</sup>

Albanian law allows pre-university public and private education systems according to the Law on the Pre-university Education System signed in 1995. Religious education is prohibited in public schools, and ideological and religious indoctrination is forbidden (Article 7). Private educational institutions in which the teaching is performed in Albanian can be established only through and by the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science. Schools affiliated with a religion can be licensed with the permission of the Council of Ministers, in accordance with a proposal by the Ministry of Education. It is mandatory that they offer a curriculum that is not in opposition with the national interests of Albanian legislation and public order, requirements that are supervised by the Ministry of Education. Permission for opening private schools, including religious ones, can be granted after one year from the date of application (Article 44).<sup>77</sup> Religious schools share the same financial fate as the mosques, since they can not be funded by the state.<sup>78</sup> Higher public education functions under the same secular provisions, while the establishment of private religious faculties and universities is not forbidden.<sup>79</sup>

Albanian Muslims are concerned about education, because the existing Islamic educational facilities are inadequate and do not provide proper studies. Currently there are seven Muslim schools (madrassas) that function under the jurisdiction of Islamic organizations, but they are run under basic conditions. Teachers are poorly educated and underpaid.<sup>80</sup> As with the construction of mosques, foreign Islamic organizations have

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<sup>76</sup> Silvo Devetak, Liana Kalcina and Miroslav F. Polzer, eds., "Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in South—Eastern Europe," *ISCOMET—Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies*, 2004, 205–206.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>78</sup> United States Department of State, 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom —Albania, 19 September 2008, found in Web site at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbd1c.html>>.

<sup>79</sup> Evis Karandrea, "Church and State in Albania," in Silvio Ferrari, W. Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Peeters Publishers, 2003), 32.

<sup>80</sup> Miranda Vickers, "Islam in Albania," *Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom* (March 2008), 10.

taken control by funding the construction of new madrassas and by providing religious publications. Furthermore, they have provided young Albanian Muslims with educational scholarships to Arab and Asian countries. In 2006, it was reported by the Department of Education of the Albanian Muslim Community that at least 1,357 Albanian students were studying in foreign Islamic universities.<sup>81</sup> According to the State Committee on Cults, the total number of students who have studied in Muslim countries over the last 15 years may have reached several thousand.<sup>82</sup> These young men and women have obtained a much stronger sense of Islamic identity than older generations of Albanian Muslims; they have dominated several of the mosques and have thus promoted fundamentalist teachings.<sup>83</sup> Albanian Muslims strive for the opening of an Islamic University in order that ministers of their religion, along with school teachers, may be educated in Albania. In 2005, the Albanian Muslim Community (AMC), one of the strongest Muslim organizations, was granted permission by the government to found such a facility. The AMC plans to open a bank account in order to raise funds for its construction.<sup>84</sup>

The wearing of religious clothing or symbols is not prohibited by Albanian law. However, the school authorities have the right to apply an appropriate dress code, and they have occasionally forbidden the exhibition of religious symbols by students. This has resulted in the expulsion of two female students from public high schools for wearing traditional Muslim headscarves.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Miranda Vickers, "Islam in Albania," Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (March 2008), 10.

<sup>82</sup> Mentor Nazarko, "Religious Divergences in Albania and Balkan Security," in James Pettifer, Mentor Nazarko, eds., "Strengthening Religious Tolerance for a Secure Civil Society in Albania and the Southern Balkans," *NATO Science for Peace and Security Series: Human and Societal Dynamics*, Vol. 27 (November 2007), 16.

<sup>83</sup> Miranda Vickers, "Islam in Albania," *Advanced Research and Assessment Group of Defence Academy of the United Kingdom* (March 2008), 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>85</sup> United States Department of State, 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom —Albania, 19 September 2008, found in Web site at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbd1c.html>>.

### **III. CASE STUDY OF BRITAIN**

#### **A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM IN BRITAIN**

According to a 2001 census, about 1.6 million Muslims reside in the United Kingdom out of the total population of 60 million. In the post-Second World War era, labor shortages prompted significant numbers of immigrants to come from the Commonwealth countries of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.<sup>86</sup> During the 1950s, there were no legal restrictions on Muslim immigrants. These first generation Muslims evidently intended eventually to return to their homelands, after having saved a sufficient amount of money to build a house and open a small business. Taking that into account, the British government gave little consideration to their religious needs at the time. Muslims conducted their religious services in improvised prayer halls.

In 1948, the British Nationality Act gave immigrants from Commonwealth countries access to all the rights and privileges of British citizenship. This factor, along with economic and educational opportunities, encouraged South Asian immigrants to become permanent citizens.<sup>87</sup> This liberal immigration policy lasted until the early 1960s. Since then, both Labour and Conservative British governments have adopted legislation, such as the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, in order to limit further immigration.<sup>88</sup> In the face of these developments, immigrants have brought their families from their countries of origin to join them. This has resulted in a further expansion of the ethnic minorities, including those of the Islamic faith.

#### **B. ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN BRITAIN**

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in Britain. Terrorism related to Ireland has been an issue for the British authorities since the nineteenth century. Even though

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<sup>86</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 28.



ethnicity, class, and religion have been intertwined in this conflict, religion has not been the primary motivator for the Irish terrorists. Terrorism related to religion in the form of Islamic extremism only became a priority for the British government after the terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001.<sup>89</sup> Two other significant differences between the two types of terrorism are that Islamic terrorism involves suicide bombings and that it (in contrast with most Irish acts of terrorism) intends to cause massive and indiscriminate casualties, including civilians.<sup>90</sup>

The first incident of Islamic terrorism in the UK dates back to April 1980, when six armed members of the Democratic Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of Arabistan seized the Iranian embassy in London, and took 26 people as hostages. The terrorists were trained by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein and their main demand was the autonomy of the Iranian province of Khuzestan, which is located adjacent to Iraq. After the terrorists killed the Iranian press attaché, the British Special Air Service (SAS) stormed the embassy under the orders of the Prime Minister at the time, Margaret Thatcher. The terrorists killed a hostage before five of them were shot dead.<sup>91</sup> Even though this event signalled a new type of terrorism, it did not prompt the British government to focus on Islamic extremism.<sup>92</sup>

Aside from this incident, during the 1980s and 1990s no Islamic terrorist incidents took place in the UK. However, during this period many international developments contributed to the fact that British Muslims adopted a much more politicized and confrontational sense of their religious identity.<sup>93</sup> During the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the decade between 1979 and 1989 the United States and Britain armed and trained Afghan fighters. These mujahedeen finally drove out the Soviet invaders, a victory that gave new meaning to the concept of jihad (holy war) as a means of protecting

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<sup>89</sup> Steve Hewitt, *The British War on terror: Terrorism and Counter-terrorism on the Home Front since 9/11* (London ; New York : Continuum, 2008), 1, 10.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006), 9.

the Islamic faith from unbelievers. The Western powers, inhabited mainly by Christians, assisted the efforts of the mujahedeen at the time, but could not even imagine that they would be the next target of Islamic fervor.<sup>94</sup>

The Iranian revolution in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini came to power and transformed Iran into an Islamic state, cemented Islam as a potent political ideology. For British Muslims who could not put up with Britain's secular society, the new Iranian state was a triumph for Islam, a fact that reinforced their religious identity.<sup>95</sup> This became obvious in 1989, when Salman Rushdie published his novel, *The Satanic Verses*. It was considered offensive to the Islamic faith and caused an uproar in several Islamic states. The Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, demanded that Rushdie along with everybody involved in this publication be sentenced to death. Several British Muslims supported Khomeini's radical demands and protested on the streets against the book.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the fact that terrorist acts did not take place in Britain during this period, the radicalization process was already under way. This was coupled to the fact that many Islamic extremists poured into Britain and organized terrorist groups. The openness of British society and the laws focused on the rights of individuals led to the UK becoming a significant node in several international terrorist networks.<sup>97</sup>

Islamic radicals who were persecuted abroad came to Britain, which does not extradite people unless the country that requests the extradition can provide for their safety.<sup>98</sup> In other words, the British government demands assurances that the repatriated individual will not be killed or tortured. The UK has also provided political asylum to several “freedom fighters,” mainly from the Middle East and North Africa. A prime example is the case of the Algerian Rachid Ramda. The French government requested his extradition in 1995, 1996 and 2001 for the deaths of eight people and the injuries suffered

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<sup>94</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Tamara Makarenko, *International Terrorism and the UK*, in Paul Wilkinson, ed., *Homeland Security in the UK: Future Preparedness for Terrorist Attack since 9/11* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 37.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 40.

by another 150 in an attack on the Saint-Michel metro station in Paris in 1995 to which Ramda contributed financially. It took ten years and the 9/11 events for the British authorities to finally decide to extradite him.<sup>99</sup> In the meantime the tolerant stance of the British government offered fertile ground for terrorist groups to expand without any official monitoring, for propaganda material to be circulated, for recruitment to take place, and for finances for terrorist purposes to be raised.<sup>100</sup>

One of the well-known radical organizations, al-Muhajiroun (the Emigrants), was founded by Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed. The primary goal of al-Muhajiroun is to implement Sharia law in the UK and to unite all Muslims under a caliphate without national borders. Bakri has called Trafalgar Square the Mecca of Muhajiroun, and England the capital of the Islamic world.<sup>101</sup> He has also called the 9/11 terrorists the “magnificent 19” and the 7/7 terrorists the “fantastic four.” The organization is focused on the recruitment of students in order for them to join militant groups abroad and on providing funds for these groups.<sup>102</sup> In addition, it distributes propaganda material that promotes hatred against the UK and the West.

One of the prominent figures among the Islamic extremists in Britain is Abu Hamza al-Masri, a radical preacher who has operated in the Finsbury Park Mosque in North London. Even though Yemen has requested his extradition for his participation in terrorist actions, the British authorities refused to extradite him because of his asylum status.<sup>103</sup> The Finsbury Park Mosque has been associated with the recruitment of Muslims in order for them to fight in holy wars abroad, as well as with the distribution of radical Islamist propaganda.

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<sup>99</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006), 22.

<sup>100</sup> Tamara Makarenko, *International Terrorism and the UK*, in Paul Wilkinson, ed., *Homeland Security in the UK: Future Preparedness for Terrorist Attack since 9/11* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 40.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>103</sup> Tamara Makarenko, *International Terrorism and the UK*, in Paul Wilkinson, ed., *Homeland Security in the UK: Future Preparedness for Terrorist Attack since 9/11* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 44.

Several terrorists are considered to have been connected with Abu Hamza. Among them was Richard Reid, known as the “shoe bomber.” On 22 December 2001, during a flight to Miami, he tried unsuccessfully to detonate explosives hidden in his shoes. He was put on trial and sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>104</sup> Other individuals, such as Zacarias Moussaoui, who was connected with the 9/11 attacks, and Abu Doha, who was allegedly involved in a plan to bomb the Los Angeles airport, were closely connected to Abu Hamza. Hamza himself was finally arrested in 2004 and convicted two years later on 11 charges related to terrorism.<sup>105</sup>

The list of terrorist organizations active in the UK includes those associated with Al Qaeda. In 1994 the Advisory and Reformation Committee was established by Osama bin Laden as a department functioning as a “media information centre.” Its role was mainly to publish bin Laden's statements, and to secretly recruit members for military operations.<sup>106</sup> The Committee for Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) was another Al Qaeda organization, which, according to its founder Mohammed al-Massari, was the “ideological voice” of Al Qaeda. Through its website in the internet, the organization called for attacks against coalition forces and the deaths of U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Besides propaganda, the CDLR has participated in terrorist activities in East Africa, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.<sup>107</sup>

Even though an elaborate system of terrorist organizations already existed prior to the 7/7 bombings, virtually all terrorist activity stemming from these organizations took place outside the United Kingdom. Terrorist operations have been carried out in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Tanzania and the United States.<sup>108</sup> The fact that these operations took place far from British shores may have contributed to the failure of British authorities to pay more

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<sup>104</sup> Steve Hewitt, *The British War on terror: Terrorism and Counter-terrorism on the Home Front since 9/11* (London ; New York : Continuum, 2008), 68.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>106</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006), 6.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006), 5.

attention to the terrorist network that was gradually growing in the UK.<sup>109</sup> According to Melanie Phillips, there was “a kind of unspoken ‘gentlemen’s agreement’” that if the British government left the Islamic extremists alone they would not turn against the country that protected them.<sup>110</sup> The Blair government’s response in regard to the domestic Islamic terrorist threat was to promote new legislation (Terrorism Act 2000, Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, and Terrorism Act 2006) that gave the police additional powers.

The British security services had enormous gaps in intelligence with regard to Islamic organizations, even after the 9/11 events. As a result, the 7 July 2005 bombings found them unprepared.<sup>111</sup> That day four young men, Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Jermaine Lindsay, and Hasib Hussain, entered the London tube system carrying explosives. At 8.50 a.m. and for the next 60 seconds the bombs carried by the first three men exploded. The fourth bomber, because his train was running late, climbed a London bus instead. At 9.47 a.m. he detonated his bomb, raising the dead to a total of 52 people and the injured to 700.<sup>112</sup>

### **C. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BRITAIN**

Scholars generally agree that British immigration policy is based on the principle of multiculturalism. This means that the state allows minority groups to participate in their own social structures and to maintain their customs and religious practices. Moreover, the national education system is expected to embrace cultural pluralism and to support all religions equally.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, some experts hold, in practice, prejudice and discrimination that have often been reflected in governmental practices. To begin with, the United Kingdom

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<sup>109</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2006), 17.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>112</sup> Steve Hewitt, *The British War on terror: Terrorism and Counter-terrorism on the Home Front since 9/11* (London ; New York : Continuum, 2008), 50.

<sup>113</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30.

lacks a legal framework in which religious rights are considered fundamental. Muslims have, however, been allowed to practice their religion in accord with the civil law. The 1976 Race Relations Act prohibited discrimination on racial and ethnic grounds but not on religious grounds. Even though the reaction of the first generation Muslim immigrants was quite mild (they minimized the religious features of their identity), eventually the problem came to the surface with second- and third-generation Muslims. They regarded British social and cultural values as dangerously secular, and they turned to Islam in seeking cultural identity and pride. In order to keep their faith alive and pass it to the next generation, they started forming religious, social, educational and political organizations.<sup>114</sup>

The 1976 Race Relations Act and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act of 2000 are, some observers maintain, insufficient to provide the same protection for Muslims as for ethnic groups, because of the absence of clear legislative guidelines regarding the meaning of “race” and “ethnic origins.” Muslims are not considered as a single group identified by the same race, color, nationality, ethnic or national origin, so they are excluded from protection by the provisions of the Act.<sup>115</sup> The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations appear to constitute the only existing legislation that has to do with preventing religious discrimination. These regulations prohibit discrimination, harassment and victimization on grounds of religion and belief with respect to employment and vocational training.<sup>116</sup> The British government has also adopted the Human Rights Act of 1998, which is in line with the European Convention on Human Rights provisions on religious freedom. However, the Act specifically addresses the

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<sup>114</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>115</sup> Javaid Rehman, “Islam, ‘War on Terror’ and the Future of Muslim Minorities in the United Kingdom: Dilemmas of Multiculturalism in the Aftermath of the London Bombings,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 29, 2007, 848.

<sup>116</sup> Javaid Rehman, “Islam, ‘War on Terror’ and the Future of Muslim Minorities in the United Kingdom: Dilemmas of Multiculturalism in the Aftermath of the London Bombings,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 29, 2007, 849.

responsibilities of the state towards individuals. This is the reason why Muslims assert that it is not a sufficient legal tool to protect them against the actions of private individuals.<sup>117</sup>

The United Kingdom's "blasphemy law," when it still existed, also proved to be insufficient to protect the religious rights of Muslims, in contrast with Christians. The blasphemy law prohibited "insult to the tenets and beliefs of the Church of England," thus excluding other religions from its protection. A typical example is the Salman Rushdie Affair. The efforts to prevent *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie's 1988 book, from being published in the United Kingdom, and to bring the author to trial via the blasphemy law for having blasphemed the Prophet Mohammad and his wives, were unsuccessful. On the other hand, the law was successfully invoked against insults to Christianity. In 1977, Mary Whitehouse prosecuted the magazine *Gay News* for the publication of James Kirkup's poem "The Love that Dares to Speak its Name," which presented a gay portrayal of Jesus. The editor of the magazine, Denis Lemon, was sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment; and the magazine was fined 1,000 British pounds. Muslims argued that the law discriminated against them and that it should be extended to include Islam, rather than just Christianity.<sup>118</sup> Instead, the British government introduced the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act of 2008 with a specific amendment to abolish the "common law offenses of blasphemy and blasphemous libel." This rendered the Muslim argument for equal protection against blasphemy moot, since now no religion in the United Kingdom enjoys legal protection regarding blasphemy.<sup>119</sup>

The most important public policy area that Muslims are concerned with is education. Even though they see a better future for their children through education, they recognize at the same time that public schools might undermine their religious values.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 32, 35.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>119</sup> Ruth N. Geller, "Goodbye to Blasphemy in Britain," Institute for Humanist Studies, May 14, 2008 found in Web site at: <<http://humaniststudies.org/enews/?id=348&article=0-22k->>.

<sup>120</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27.

In the years immediately after World War II, religious education in the United Kingdom was Christian-oriented, since there was little religious diversity at the time. The Education Act of 1944 provided that religious education must be included in the public school's curriculum and that collective worship should be conducted at the beginning of the day. However, it was not specified that both religious education and worship should be of a Christian character. It was rather considered obvious that it would be so, since Christianity was the predominant religion at the time. The Act also introduced the Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Instruction. Local Education Authorities (LEA) were assigned to conduct a Syllabus Conference in which the Church of England and "other denominations" were supposed to participate. However, besides the Anglican Church, only Protestant Christians were represented. Other religions were ignored. It was not until the 1970s that the LEA allowed non-Christian representatives to participate in the conferences.<sup>121</sup>

The Education Act of 1988 specified that religious education and collective worship would be mainly of a Christian character but nevertheless would take into account the teachings and practices of other religions. In practice, school authorities retain flexibility to make adjustments in their religious curricula, according to the local parents' preferences. In addition, every student can exercise the right of withdrawal from religious education lessons if he considers them inconsistent with his religious values.<sup>122</sup> The government has also established Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) to supervise the use of Agreed Syllabuses. Efforts are made to ensure that the minimum number of students exercise their right of withdrawal.<sup>123</sup> The Education Act of 1988 provided also that the educational curriculum in state schools must promote "the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Jackson and Kevin O'Grady, "Religion and Education in England," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 183.

<sup>122</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Jackson and Kevin O'Grady, "Religion and Education in England," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 184.



society.” This meant that religious education, in addition to involving the study of religion, should also have a positive effect on each student’s personal development.<sup>124</sup>

In 1994, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) in cooperation with religious communities drafted model syllabuses that included material on Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. These were available for the Local Education Authorities to consult during Agreed Syllabus Conferences. The government has also introduced a National Framework for religious education. This was drafted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, which was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills. Religious communities and other NGOs were consulted, and the final project was published in October 2004. The National Framework for religious education is intended to improve the quality of teaching, contribute to the personal development of students, and support a plurality of materials for religious education. It also allows for the study of non-religious philosophies.<sup>125</sup>

Even though, according to studies, Muslim organizations are more likely to report unfair treatment in education than their Christian, Jewish or Buddhist counterparts, school officials have in general tried to satisfy their demands. Issues such as dress codes for girls participating in physical education classes, provision of halal meat, and time off for religious holidays have been resolved according to their needs. The wearing of the hijab (headscarf), which is an issue of considerable political controversy in France, raises no questions in the United Kingdom. When the colors of the headscarf are the same as those of the school’s uniform, the headscarf may be worn.<sup>126</sup>

Another major political issue is that the government until recently granted economic aid for Anglican, Catholic and Jewish schools but not for Muslim ones. This was regarded as more a matter of civil rights for the Muslim community than an educational issue. The performance of Muslim children in their studies is in general

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<sup>124</sup> Robert Jackson and Kevin O’Grady, “Religion and Education in England,” in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 185.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>126</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40–42.

below that of the national average, and parents hold that this is a result of attending state schools. In addition, Muslim parents argue that Muslim schools are necessary to promote Islamic values in a secular environment.<sup>127</sup> The 1944 Education Act made a distinction between two kinds of state-maintained schools. The first kind consisted of the County schools (public schools) that were entirely funded by the state. The second kind was composed of the Voluntary schools initially funded by religious organizations. Over time, these Voluntary schools went into partnership with the state. There are three types of Voluntary schools: Aided, Controlled and Special Agreement Voluntary schools. Controlled and Special Agreement Voluntary schools are entirely funded by the government. In contrast, religious organizations can contribute to financing the construction and maintenance of the Voluntary Aided schools. Such contributions give them the right to appoint the majority of governors in the school's councils.

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, Muslims founded their first religious schools in the United Kingdom. The Muslim organizations that financially supported these schools applied to the Department of Education for economic aid. Initially, all of the applications were turned down.<sup>128</sup> Critics of Muslim private schools asserted that the participation of Muslim children in state schools would help them to get effectively integrated into British society. Muslims were diametrically opposed to this argument if it meant that their children had to assimilate liberal and secular values instead of retaining their own Islamic values.

In 1997, the Labour government changed its policies in favor of a pluralistic faith school system. Since then the government has provided funding to religiously affiliated schools of multiple faiths, rather than just Christian schools. In 1998, the School Standards and Framework Act introduced four types of school eligible for state funding. These were: Community (formerly County), Foundation, Voluntary Aided, and Voluntary Controlled schools. All three types except Community schools are allowed to

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<sup>127</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Jackson and Kevin O'Grady, "Religion and Education in England," in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 187.

have a religious character. Moreover, Voluntary Aided schools can provide “denominational” religious education, while Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools with a religious character must follow the Agreed Syllabuses.<sup>129</sup> In 2006, there were 7,000 faith schools in total, of which 4,646 were Church of England schools, 2,041 Roman Catholic, 37 Jewish, 9 Muslim, 2 Sikh and 1 Hindu.<sup>130</sup>

The British educational system has been in general quite helpful and accommodating for Muslim needs. However, as mentioned previously, radicalization and recruitment often occur at mosques. It should be noted that mosque building is not a matter of controversy in the United Kingdom. It is as easy to build one, as it is to build any other religious edifice.<sup>131</sup>

Integration has nonetheless not occurred for many British Muslims at various socioeconomic levels. The unemployment rate among Muslims is three times that of the general population, and poverty—especially for Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims—is an immediate result.<sup>132</sup> Such factors, along with their rejection of secularism and materialism, lead them to seek a new identity. Radical Islamic clerics take advantage of that search for identity and purpose; and, by preaching the virtues of jihad; they manage to radicalize some Muslims, who become susceptible to recruitment into terrorist organizations.

The United Kingdom has adopted several active measures in order to counter the risk that individuals may organize into groups and commit violent actions. According to the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCSA), the Home Secretary has the power to issue a certificate against any non-nationals who are believed to threaten national security. These individuals can be extradited to another state for trial. If,

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<sup>129</sup> Robert Jackson and Kevin O’Grady, “Religion and Education in England,” in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 188.

<sup>130</sup> Dominic Casciani, “Q&A: Faith Schools and quotas,” *BBC News*, October 31, 2006, at: [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/6091280.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6091280.stm).

<sup>131</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27.

<sup>132</sup> Barbara Franz, “Europe’s Muslim Youth: An Inquiry into the Politics of Discrimination, Relative Deprivation, and Identity Formation,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* (Winter 2007), 97.

however, there is a prospect that in this other state he will be subjected to torture or inhumane and degrading treatment, he can be detained without trial in a British prison. This is the case with several Muslim men detained at Belmarsh high-security prison, which is often called the “British Guantanamo Bay.”

On the basis of “Unacceptable Behaviors,” individuals can be deported or excluded from the UK. This legal regime includes people who write, publish or distribute material, preach or speak in public, or run a website in order to express radical views or incite people to commit terrorist acts. On such grounds of unacceptable behavior, 36 foreigners have been deported to date. It seems, however, that such active measures may propel Muslims to frustration and fall short of countering terrorism as a whole.

This study suggests that passive measures be incorporated in governmental policies in order to deal with the problem more effectively. Specifically a properly formulated religious education can help young people understand and respect different beliefs, practices, races and cultures. This would overall promote a culture of tolerance. In 2004, the UK announced that all “ministers of religion” coming from abroad who wish to preach in Britain must possess basic skills in English. Many British Muslims apparently back efforts designed to ensure that their clerics understand British culture and society. In order to achieve this objective, the UK government is in contact with faith communities on how to formulate additional requirements. It is hoped that more use of the English language and greater regard for British culture in mosques will help to bridge the cultural divide between Islam and mainstream British society. Moreover, citizenship study has been mandatory in British secondary schools since 2002. Civic understanding, responsibility and participation among young people are expected to foster a sense of belonging in Muslims and other minorities.<sup>133</sup>

These are positive signs that the United Kingdom intends to use religious education as a tool to foster a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding. However, there is a lot yet to be done so that religious education actually serves as an effective tool

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<sup>133</sup> Paul Gallis, Kristin Archick, Francis Miko and Steven Woehrel, *Muslims in Europe: Integration Policies in Selected Countries*, RL33166 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 18 November 2005), 14.

in the fight against terrorism. The UK government should consider removing any remaining restrictions in funding Voluntary Aided schools for Muslims and at the same time encourage Muslim parents to get positively involved in the running of these schools. Moreover, founding supplementary institutions for educating imams and teachers may help to limit the presence of foreign imams who may be proponents of radical views. Governmental authorities should cooperate with official Muslim associations or even with the authorities of the countries of origin of foreign imams, in order to specify the educational requirements for Muslim clerics and teachers. However, Muslim clerics and teachers should probably be educated in Europe, so that they have an understanding of European societies. Finally, Muslim teachers who have acquired a well-formulated religious education should be given an opportunity to participate in the drafting of the curriculum and share their ideas with other educators in order to promote inter-cultural understanding.

## **IV. CASE STUDY OF FRANCE**

### **A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM IN FRANCE**

Even though French authorities do not collect statistical information on citizens or residents in regard to their race, ethnicity or religion, it has been estimated that approximately 6 million Muslims reside today in France, or about ten percent of the total French population. As in the British case, mass immigration began after World War II because of a severe labor shortage. The immigrants' main countries of origin were Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. During their stay in France they forwarded money to their families back home, with the intention to return someday. As economic and occasionally political conditions in their homelands worsened, the plan to return faded with time.<sup>134</sup> Specifically, the oil crisis in 1974 forced the French government to stop importing labor and to embrace a rather anti-immigrant policy or at least to restrict family reunification. In contrast to the French authorities' ambitions, the temporary immigrants became permanent and managed in addition to bring their families to France.<sup>135</sup> This resulted in France becoming one of the most multi-ethnic societies in Europe.

### **B. ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN FRANCE**

Although there is a long history of political violence associated with French interactions with Muslim societies, this discussion is limited to the French experience with terrorism in the last thirty years. During this period France has encountered three distinct types of terrorism. The first type of terrorism was advocated by groups with a radical leftist philosophy. Action Directe was the most aggressive of these groups, and it consisted of home grown terrorists who were against the capitalist system and American-led "imperialism." The groups' terrorist acts evolved from attacking material targets to

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<sup>134</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 64.

<sup>135</sup> Leslie J. Limage, "Education and Muslim Identity: The Case of France," *Comparative Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2000).

political assassination until they were finally dismantled by the French authorities in the late 1980s.<sup>136</sup> The second type of terrorism is expressed by regional separatist groups. The most prominent of these groups act in the Basque Country (IK: Iparretarrak), in Brittany (FLB: Front de Libération de la Bretagne) and in Corsica (FLNC: Front de Libération National de la Corse), advocating independence or autonomy.<sup>137</sup> The third type of terrorism encountered by the French government is international terrorism, which originates for the most part in the Middle East.

The Renseignements Généraux (RG), the French intelligence service, estimates that about 5,000 salafists reside in France, 500 of who are considered potentially dangerous.<sup>138</sup> The existing terrorist networks seek to recruit potential members among young Muslims who are radicalized and French citizens of a non-Muslim heritage who convert to Islam.<sup>139</sup>

Among the first incidents of international terrorism in France during this period was a bomb explosion on 3 October 1980. Middle Eastern terrorists attached the bomb to a motorbike parked outside the synagogue on the Rue Copernic. The explosion killed four passers-by and wounded eleven people. This was one of the six attacks on Jewish targets that took place that week. The aim of the terrorists was to influence French foreign policy in the Middle East, and the French authorities did not anticipate such attacks.<sup>140</sup> On 14 December 1999, the Algerian Ahmed Ressam was arrested on the US-Canadian border for transferring explosives, which were intended for use in a terrorist

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<sup>136</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 68.

<sup>137</sup> Shaun Gregory, "France and the War on Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 2003), 125–126.

<sup>138</sup> Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse, *Integrating Islam. Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2006), 245.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>140</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 67.

attack on the Los Angeles International Airport. Even though Ressam was not a French national, he was being monitored by the French anti-terrorism authorities, who warned the Canadian authorities of his plans.<sup>141</sup>

It is obvious that in the period between the two incidents mentioned above, French anti-terrorism capabilities increased enough to contribute significantly to the fight against terrorism. This did not happen overnight but was rather a process that occurred in several different stages. In the years before the 1980s, French governments had tried to insulate France from international terrorism by managing the country's foreign policy in such a way that it would be distant from issues related to international terrorism. In the same way that the British authorities thought that they had struck a “gentlemen’s agreement” with Islamic extremists, French authorities provided impunity to terrorist group members on the condition that they would not attack France. Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan describe this policy as the “sanctuary doctrine.”<sup>142</sup>

The advantage of this doctrine was that France could maintain good relations with states that supported terrorist groups resident on French soil. The drawbacks, however, were several. First of all, it created political problems with states that faced attacks by terrorists operating from France. Secondly, the French authorities had to secretly communicate with these terrorist groups in order to monitor them effectively. This contact, however, damaged the political profile of government parties during their electoral campaigns.<sup>143</sup>

The most significant negative effect of the sanctuary doctrine was that terrorists were free to organize logistical and operational networks that could turn against France at any opportunity. This was the case with the bomb attack on the Rue Copernic mentioned above. Several similar attacks occurred during the early 1980s. One example was the 1982 attack on the Rue Marbeuf in Paris. With the assistance of Palestinian terrorist groups, Syrians plant a car bomb outside the building of a pro-Iraqi newspaper; and the

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<sup>141</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-terrorism,” *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 70.



explosion killed one person and injured sixty-three others. Even though both these attacks were a result of disputes among foreign states, the fact that they took place on French soil caused considerable public anxiety.<sup>144</sup>

The peak of terrorist attacks during this period was reached in 1986 with a series of assaults on public buildings and infrastructure in Paris by the Committee for Solidarity with Near Eastern Political Prisoners (CSPPA).<sup>145</sup> Fourteen terrorist incidents killed 11 people and wounded more than 220. At the same time, French relations with several Muslim states worsened. French participation in the multinational force that intervened in the civil war in Lebanon, France's opposition to the Libyan invasion of Chad, and the country's role as a weapon supplier of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war, caused frictions between France and Syria, Libya and Iran respectively. These three Muslim states took advantage of the existing Palestinian and Lebanese networks in France and conducted several attacks on French soil in order to influence the government's foreign policies in the Middle East.<sup>146</sup>

Since French security services were unable to prevent the attacks, the government was left with no option but to try to improve its relations with the Middle Eastern states. For example, French authorities managed to strike a deal with Syria according to which the latter would stop supporting terrorist groups in France, provide intelligence on Lebanese terrorists, and secure the release of French hostages in Lebanon in exchange for French diplomatic support and the provision of arms and financial aid. A similar arrangement was made with Iran. Even though French authorities denied that both of these deals were actually concluded, they resulted in reduced international terrorist attacks on French soil during the period from 1987 to 1994.<sup>147</sup>

Regardless what French foreign policy towards Muslim states was, it soon became apparent that the country's anti-terrorism capabilities were inadequate. In order

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<sup>144</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 71.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 74.

to deal with this problem the French authorities decided to enhance the capabilities of the police and to upgrade the judicial system in regard to counter-terrorism. The first measure was the legislation of September 1986, which provided the establishment of new organizations specialized in terrorism. The role of these organizations, namely the Unité de Coordination de la Lutte Anti-Terroriste (UCLAT, within the Interior Ministry) and the Service pour Coordination de la Lutte Anti-Terroriste (SCLAT, within the Justice Ministry), was to coordinate all the intelligence and security services within the French government on issues related to terrorism.<sup>148</sup>

The 1986 legislation also provided for longer prison terms, as well as longer detention and investigation periods in regard to terrorist crimes. The most important provision, however, was the establishment of a small league of prosecutors and investigating magistrates within the Trial Court of Paris, which was assigned responsibility for the investigation of terrorist cases. These magistrates had expertise in specific types of terrorism, such as separatist or Islamic activities. As their capacity to deal with terrorist acts increased, they achieved a statutory independence from political authorities. This status denied policymakers a strong say in a significant matter of government policy, but at the same time it relieved them from the responsibility to answer to the public in potential failures to respond to terrorism.<sup>149</sup>

The first serious terrorist incidents that the integrated French counter-terrorism mechanism had to deal with were those that resulted from the Algerian civil war and the subsequent spill-over on French soil. During the 1992 multi-party elections in Algeria, the army suspended the process and seized power because an Islamist party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), was going to win the elections. This fact frustrated several Algerian Muslims who organized themselves into the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and managed to gather support from Islamists in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The GIA, besides envisaging a seizure of political power in Algeria, also visualized a Caliphate that

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<sup>148</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 77.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–79.

would be established in Algeria and then expanded to the rest of the world.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, since the early 1990s, Al Qaeda has managed to penetrate the FIS, the GIA and the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC) in order to strengthen the ties among Islamic terrorist groups in Europe.<sup>151</sup>

In the GIA members' minds, France exploited Algeria's resources during the colonial period. Moreover, they asserted, France supported the military junta that forced Algerian Muslims into slavery and drove them away from the Islamic religion. In view of these opinions, it was obvious even to the French authorities that France would be a highly probable target.<sup>152</sup> The first terrorist incident related to the GIA took place in Algiers on 24 October 1993, when 3 French consular agents were held hostage. After their release, one of them carried back the terrorists' message: "the security of French citizens in Algeria is under threat from this moment forward."<sup>153</sup> French authorities responded with a wave of arrests and interrogations in the framework of "Operation Chrysanthemum," which was launched on 9 November 1993. The purpose of the measures taken was to send the message that radical Islamist activity on French soil would be suppressed.

On 8 November 1994, French authorities dismantled the Chalabi network, a group known for its support for the armed struggle against the Algerian government. In response, on 24 December 1994, the GIA hijacked an Air France flight from Algiers to Paris. The message sent was that attacks would be carried out within France in the future. The GIA also demanded that France stop assisting the Algerian government and release FIS and GIA members who were held in custody. French special forces assaulted the

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<sup>150</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 79.

<sup>151</sup> Shaun Gregory, "France and the War on Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 2003), 132–133.

<sup>152</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 79.

<sup>153</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003), 80.

plane two days later and killed the terrorists. It was later found out that the terrorist plan was to crash the aircraft over central Paris or even into the Eiffel tower.<sup>154</sup>

On 2 June 1995, French police arrested 131 people in Marseilles, Paris, Perpignan, Tourcoing and Orléans. The terrorists arrested belonged to a European network that supported Algerian terrorist groups, including the GIA. On 25 July 1995, terrorist attacks were committed in reprisals by networks operating in Lyon and in Lille. During a series of attacks between July and October 1995, 10 people were killed and over 150 were injured.<sup>155</sup>

The continuing fight with terrorism during the 1980s and the 1990s provided the French counter-terrorism authorities an understanding of Islamic extremism. This knowledge proved to be valuable because it allowed security services to successfully track down terrorist groups and arrest their members. Moreover, magistrates managed to reduce the time required for investigations. New legislation in 1995 and 1996 introduced the notion that “the participation in any group formed or association established with a view to the preparation, marked by one or more material actions, of any of the acts of terrorism provided for under the previous articles shall in addition be an act of terrorism.”<sup>156</sup> This allowed the magistrates to conduct investigations before terrorist attacks were committed, thus upgrading significantly their prevention capabilities.

### **C. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN FRANCE**

In order to integrate the immigrants into French society, the government founded institutions such as the High Council for Integration and the National Immigration Office, which would manage the migration flow and conduct immigration-related research.<sup>157</sup> Concerning the minorities’ religious accommodation, the French policy was (and

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<sup>154</sup> Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-terrorism,” *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (Spring 2003).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse, *Integrating Islam. Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2006), 261.

<sup>157</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 68.

remains) governed by *laïcité*, meaning a secularist stance from the state that would not interfere in religious matters. The freedom of worship would therefore be restricted only by civil law while the state would not pay salaries to members of the clergy or fund any form of worship.<sup>158</sup> The equality of all citizens before the law without regard for their origin, race, or religion is also established by the 1958 Constitution of the Fifth Republic.

In practice, however, many Muslims complain that they do not enjoy true religious liberty. The debate over whether Muslim girls should wear the hijab at school is a premium example to which they refer to as a deprivation of their religious freedom. The “scarf affair” began when three Muslim schoolgirls were sent home by the principal of a public junior high school in a Paris suburb. After a week of negotiations, the school authorities and the Muslim parents reached the compromise that the girls would be allowed to wear the headscarves everywhere in the school except for the classroom. Ten days later, when the girls refused to remove their scarves, they were suspended again and the issue started to gain an enormous amount of public attention. Eventually, the Conseil d’Etat decided that wearing the hijab would be allowed as long as the function of the public schools was not disturbed. Because of the ambiguous wording of this decision, the current situation varies considerably according to the individual school principal’s orientation on the matter. The overall result of the debate is that many Muslim girls do not obtain a normal public education.<sup>159</sup>

Other issues of minor importance in comparison with the “scarf affair” include the dress code for girls participating in physical education classes, the provision of halal meat, and the absence of religious education in the curriculum of French government schools.<sup>160</sup> Even though the philosophical foundations of French state schooling are intended to offer equality before a body of knowledge, in practice they do not promote diversity. The languages of the minorities and the preservation of their cultural identities

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<sup>158</sup> Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 69.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

have no place in French government schools. Students who wish to take Arabic classes have to obtain a special authorization and receive distance education courses only.<sup>161</sup>

Even though Muslims are eligible to receive state aid for their private schools, in practice the educational authorities have approved funding for just two. The first one is located in Saint Denis-de-la-Réunion in Paris.<sup>162</sup> The second is in Lille and functions under the auspices of the Islamic cultural centre of the city.<sup>163</sup> This is a result of the strict preconditions that the private schools are obliged to satisfy, before funding can be approved. Namely, the school must have already been functioning for five years, the teachers must be well qualified, there must be an adequate number of students, and the school facilities must be clean. Considering that most Muslims in France lack substantial financial resources, the functioning of the school for five years may be impossible.

Owing to hostility in some quarters to Muslim religious practices, the building of mosques has often faced local political opposition. Mosques are typically constructed under a legal framework that was initially used by the Catholic Church in the 1930s. Under this framework, a city should grant a lease of 18 to 99 years to a group wishing to build a house of worship.<sup>164</sup> However, some of the French cities with the largest Muslim populations, such as Marseilles and Toulouse, have presented the greatest opposition to the construction of mosques. Despite the increase in the number of mosques in France over the last two decades, the existing facilities are still not enough to accommodate all the believers. Currently there are 8 “Grand Mosques,” 120 mosques accommodating 200-1,000 people each, and more than 1,000 other places of worship.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Leslie J. Limage, “Education and Muslim Identity: The Case of France,” *Comparative Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2000), 79.

<sup>162</sup> Dan-Paul Jozsa, “Islam and Education in Europe,” in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, Jean-Paul Willaime, eds., *Religion and Education in Europe* (New York/ München/ Berlin: Waxmann Münster, 2007), 183.

<sup>163</sup> Leslie J. Limage, “Education and Muslim Identity: The Case of France,” *Comparative Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2000), 90.

<sup>164</sup> Carolyn M. Warner, “Cemeteries and Mosques: Muslim Collective Action in Switzerland and France,” Department of Political Science, Arizona State University, paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, 28–31 August 2008, 15.

<sup>165</sup> Statistics about France found in Web site at <<http://www.objectiffrance.org>>.

Since the late 1980s, the idea that every major French city should have a grand mosque has been voiced. The provision of financial support for building and maintaining these prayer halls was supposed to be a mechanism to ensure surveillance and monitoring of the practitioners of Islam. They would also become places for integration and not for fundamentalism and social division, since Islamic practice would be more transparent. However, now that a greater number of middle-sized mosques has been built, the idea of the grand mosques has been abandoned.<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, the Muslims that practice their religion in the existing mosques are dependent for their activities on the personalities of the clerical leaders.<sup>167</sup> Since there is no facility in France for the training of the imams, virtually all of them come from abroad. 40 percent come from Morocco, 24 percent from Algeria, 6 percent from Tunisia and 16 percent from Turkey. Their religious training is likely to be fundamentalist and to clash with secular French laws.<sup>168</sup> This also means that they are not familiar with French society and the problems of the local Muslim communities, factors that make them incapable of acting as effective advisors and mediators.<sup>169</sup> In the worst case scenario, they could be radical clerics who came to France in order to proselytize.

Since the mid-1990s, France has developed a counter-terrorism strategy, which includes monitoring mosques, clerics and their sermons. This is conducted by the French internal intelligence service, the Renseignements Généraux (RG), and it has identified radical mosques almost everywhere in France. In practice, the RG agents collect the Friday sermons, analyze the information, and determine which imams are preaching a radical version of Islam, and whether they participate in terrorist activities by recruiting

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<sup>166</sup> Marcel Maussen, "Islamic Presence and Mosque Establishment in France: Colonialism, Arrangements for Guestworkers and Citizenship," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.33, No 6, August 2007, 994–997.

<sup>167</sup> Leslie J. Limage, "Education and Muslim Identity: The Case of France," *Comparative Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2000), 79.

<sup>168</sup> Jon Henley, "Imams to be taught French way of life," *The Guardian*, December 8, 2004.

<sup>169</sup> Leslie J. Limage, "Education and Muslim Identity: The Case of France," *Comparative Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 2000), 89.

new members or otherwise supporting terrorist networks. They specifically focus on anti-Western rhetoric, anti-Semitism or open calls for jihads; and when this kind of information is identified, they increase their surveillance.

According to RG estimates in 2006, 80 out of 1,685 places of worship were actively participating in radicalization and recruitment, while 40 out of these had links with radical Islamic networks. Even though half of these were trying to avoid radical pressure, the other half were already run by radical clerics. In the mid-1990s, the French parliament authorized a law for the deportation without trial of people who present a security threat, including foreign imams who preach a radical brand of Islam. The expulsion of these individuals (11 in 2005) is not only an active measure against radicalization, but a passive one also, since it gives the rest of the imams an incentive to moderate their discourse. However, Muslims who attend the sermons in a mosque do not necessarily get active in the mosque. They meet with each other there, but they might plot their activities later, without the knowledge of the local cleric. This would require a surveillance program to be applied not just to a mosque but also to the people attending its services, which would be a much more difficult project to accomplish.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Pascale Combelles Siegel, "Radical Islam and the French Muslim Prison Population," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. IV, Is. 15, July 2006, 4–6.



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## V. CASE STUDY OF FYROM

### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM IN FYROM

According to the last census, which was conducted in 1994, in FYROM almost 30 percent out of the population of 1.9 million are Muslims, and they comprise the largest religious minority.<sup>171</sup> The largest religious community is the Orthodox (66.3%), while Catholics and Protestants are in proportions smaller than 1%. Muslims are divided between those who adhere to Sunni Islam and those who adhere to Shiite Bektashi Islam, with the latter in the minority. Moreover, 22.9% of the Muslims are ethnic Albanians while the rest include ethnic Turks, Roma, and Bosnians. Some Muslims, called Torbeshi, were by ancestry inhabitants of the territory of the present state.<sup>172</sup>

The Christian religion appeared in the territory now held by FYROM at the same time as in the rest of the Balkans. Historically this is connected with Saint Paul's activity in the region.<sup>173</sup> As in the case of Albania, the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottomans in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century introduced Islam to a land formerly inhabited by Christians. Islam was either coercively spread by the violent recruitment of young males to the Turkish military or in a voluntary manner, with practical inducements. Converts could avoid taxation or occupy positions in the Ottoman administration. Soon after the Ottoman occupation, many upper class landholders converted to Islam in order to safeguard their properties or even accumulate more possessions from the rulers. Conversion in towns often meant that converts adopted the Turkish language and culture. In rural areas, on the other hand, Christians resisted conversion, continued to build churches without official approval, and found innovative ways to lessen or even avoid taxation. Even those who were Islamized, in most cases, preserved their language and customs. Muslims who

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<sup>171</sup> United States Department of State, 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom—Macedonia, 19 September 2008, found in Web site at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbd1c.html>>.

<sup>172</sup> Maria Koinova, "Muslims of Macedonia," Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe- Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE), 3.

<sup>173</sup> Hasan Jashari, "Contemporary Movements and Religion Among Macedonian Albanians," in Arburim Iseni and Hyreme Gurra, eds., *Academic and Scientific Journal of Linguistics, Literature, Education and Culture*, Is. 1 (June 2008), 170.

resided in the eastern region of the territory now known as FYROM were named “Pomaks,” while those in the west were called “Torbeshi.”<sup>174</sup> The majority of the mosques on FYROM’s territory today were built in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

During the period of Ottoman rule, which lasted until the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), many Ottoman Muslims inhabited the land, and this explains their continuing presence in FYROM. This was a rather urban colonization, since the administrative, military, and judicial organs of the empire were concentrated in towns. According to existing evidence, until the mid- or late sixteenth century, the Muslim urban population continuously increased while the Orthodox Christian one decreased.<sup>175</sup>

The demographic picture of FYROM was affected by the Albanian colonization that started in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and by the Bosnian Muslim migration after the Berlin Treaty of 1878, which put Bosnia-Herzegovina under the rule of Austria-Hungary. In 1919, the territory now known as FYROM became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. The territory now known as FYROM was considered “southern Serbia” at the time. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, there was no separation between church and state. The church performed several functions for the state, such as keeping registers for births, marriages and deaths. Some religious primary and secondary schools functioned under the jurisdiction of the churches, and religious education was compulsory. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, FYROM received several thousands of Muslim refugees as a result of the Bosnia and Kosovo wars.<sup>176</sup>

## **B. ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN FYROM**

During 2001, a clash took place in FYROM between separatist Islamic terror organizations and the security forces of the national government. Several experts believe

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<sup>174</sup>Andrew Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2008), 52.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Maria Koinova, “Muslims of Macedonia,” Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe- Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE), 5–11.

that the fighting was a spill-over from the Kosovo war.<sup>177</sup> After the occupation of Kosovo by NATO troops in 1999, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was converted into a security organization, named the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). However, several former KLA fighters did not continue their activity in the KPC. Instead, they established new guerrilla and terrorist organizations in order to resume their fight in the Balkans. Moreover, after the KLA was supposedly disarmed by the multinational NATO force, part of the weaponry ended up in the hands of these new terrorist groups.<sup>178</sup>

Three organizations emerged after the dissolution of the KLA. The first one was the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac (PMBLA, or UCPMB in Albanian), which focuses on a region along the south-western border between Serbia and Kosovo. The remaining two organizations were the National Liberation Army (NLA, or UCK in Albanian) and the Albanian National Army (ANA, or AKSh in Albanian) whose combat epicentre was in FYROM. (The ANA is a terrorist organization, and it should not be confused with the official Armed Forces of Albania.) The NLA was the main entity that conducted the 2001 insurgency. This insurgency resulted in the deaths of several people, and about 100,000 others abandoned their homes. The KPC and the Albanian government assisted the NLA by allowing the entrance into FYROM of many mujahedin. It is estimated that about 150 of these fighters, who came from countries such as Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, joined the NLA. The NLA has also incorporated various other ethnic Albanian guerrillas and guerrilla groups (e.g., the Unikom) that have been fighting in Western FYROM during the 1990s.<sup>179</sup>

The NLA declared that its aim was to “retain FYROM’s unified state status, but with a new constitution and international mediation over ethnic Albanian grievances.”<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 112.

<sup>178</sup> LaVerle Berry, Glenn E. Curtis, Rex A. Hudson, Nina A. Kollars, “A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups,” *Federal Research Division Library of Congress*, (May 2002), 80, 129.

<sup>179</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 114.

<sup>180</sup> LaVerle Berry, Glenn E. Curtis, Rex A. Hudson, Nina A. Kollars, “A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups,” *Federal Research Division Library of Congress*, (May 2002), 80.

Several scholars, however, believe that the NLA's real aim is to create a "Greater Albania," which would include territory that is currently in Albania, FYROM, Greece, Kosovo, and southern Serbia.<sup>181</sup> The 2001 insurgency was concluded with a ceasefire, and according to its framework the NATO-led multinational force in FYROM was supposed to collect all the weapons from Islamic separatists. Even though around 3,000 guns were confiscated, some weapons remained in the hands of the NLA fighters or were handed over to other terrorist organizations.<sup>182</sup>

The ANA was founded at the end of 1999 by former leaders and members of the KLA in order to continue the insurgency in northern FYROM on behalf of the rights of the ethnic Albanians residing in the region. Initially, the name of the organization was the National Committee for the Liberation of Occupied Territories (NCLOT). It is affiliated with a political movement called the Front for National Unity of Albanians (FNUA), which emerged in July 2002. The FNUA has an organizational structure that includes political, military (the ANA), intelligence, and financial departments. The FNUA was founded by members of a radical Albanian political party named the Revolutionary Party of Albanians of Tirana.<sup>183</sup>

The ANA is organized in the form of divisions that are responsible for specific geographical areas such as Kosovo and southern Serbia, Western FYROM, Montenegro, and southern Albania and Greece. The division that is active in FYROM is called the "Skenderbeu." The ANA became the most significant actor in the separatist insurgency after the ceasefire was signed in FYROM following the 2001 conflict. Many of the NLA's radical fighters and weapons were transferred to the ANA's ranks. Former

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<sup>181</sup> LaVerle Berry, Glenn E. Curtis, Rex A. Hudson, Nina A. Kollars, "A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups," *Federal Research Division Library of Congress*, (May 2002), 129.

<sup>182</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 114.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

commanders of the Albanian army joined the organization as well. The overall number of fighters in the ranks of the ANA is estimated to be around two to three thousand people.<sup>184</sup>

Western security agencies and United Nations reports confirm that the ANA is involved in illegal activities such as weapons smuggling and human and drug trafficking. With regard to narcotics, FYROM is one of the linking countries constituting the Balkan Drug Route. Drugs coming from Afghanistan are transferred through Turkey, Bulgaria, FYROM, Albania, and Italy to western markets. Money earned from these transactions is used to fund terrorist actions in FYROM and Kosovo.<sup>185</sup>

In 2002, the ANA and other smaller terrorist organizations active in FYROM (e.g., the Real Albanian National Liberation Army) declared their intention to continue fighting against the national authorities until the latter introduce constitutional amendments in favor of the Albanian minority. The ANA has claimed responsibility for several attacks against FYROM's security forces, such as the murder of three policemen on 12 November 2001.<sup>186</sup>

Besides the terrorist organizations' activities, a factor that significantly contributes to Islamic extremism in FYROM is the growing influence of Wahhabism. Following Yugoslavia's dissolution and FYROM's independence the first Wahhabis started moving into the country. A considerable instability in the ranks of the official Islamic Community (IVZ) allowed rich Saudi Arabs and people from other Islamic states to subsidize the radical movement through charities and unreported payments. The IVZ initially found itself in turmoil because a Muslim from FYROM, Jakup Selimovski, and

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<sup>184</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 116.

<sup>185</sup> LaVerle Berry, Glenn E. Curtis, Rex A. Hudson, Nina A. Kollars, "A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups," *Federal Research Division Library of Congress*, (May 2002), 84.

<sup>186</sup> Shaul Shay, *Islamic terror and the Balkans* (New Brunswick—London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 117.

an Albanian, Rexhep Sulejmani, challenged each other for the community's leadership. Finally, they and their supporting factions came to an agreement under unknown circumstances and joined forces.<sup>187</sup>

In the late 1990s, a man regarded as highly corrupt, Zenun Berisha, became the Skopje Chief Mufti. This caused even more instability in the IVZ and opened the road to the rise of the Wahhabi movement. Berisha's leadership left the IVZ exposed to the influence of outside radicals, and he participated in several economic scandals. In 2004, his practices were discovered and became known to most of the moderate imams, who consequently removed him from office. Berisha, however, had already established a strong Wahhabi network by infiltrating fundamentalist religious preachers or bureaucratic officials in every mosque in the capital of the country.<sup>188</sup> He had also developed a strong faction consisting of Albanian outlaws and Islamic extremists, which used violence in order to enforce his will. In an incident in the summer of 2005, his loyal Wahhabi group attacked a car carrying Tazhedin Beslimi, the new Skopje chief mufti, who was openly against the Wahhabis. Even though Beslimi's election contributed to the stabilization of the IVZ, the Wahhabi network seems to be so strongly established that it is difficult to remove. Moreover, experts believe that the rivalry between moderate Muslims and Wahhabis will increase in the future.<sup>189</sup>

Recruitment by the Wahhabis is usually conducted in rural mountainous areas where uneducated and narrow-minded people reside. Those who embrace the doctrine grow long beards and compel their wives and daughters to wear Islamic dress. Some of them travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan for 3 to 4 months while their families stay behind and live a comfortable life without any visible means of support. Local residents claim that their numbers have increased in the last few years, mainly because once a person becomes a Wahhabi traditionally his family has to convert as well.<sup>190</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>187</sup> Anonymous, "Wahhabism and Islamic Extremism in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: a General Overview," Defense and Foreign Affairs Special Analysis, (June 2006).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate. The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Westport, Connecticut—London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 75–76.

the FYROM border police have discovered hidden camps in mountain areas where access is difficult. Besides indoctrinating young people, at least one of these camps has been identified as a physical training centre.<sup>191</sup> In urban areas, recruiters try to convince people to convert to Wahhabism by glorifying the life of the mujahedin, “saying that everyone who fights in the name of Allah and dies will become a shahid (martyr) and go to paradise, where he will enjoy all the pleasures that he couldn’t have in this life.”<sup>192</sup>

In recent years, FYROM’s authorities have introduced new legislation in order to strengthen the existing legal framework for the prevention of—and the fight against—terrorism. The main legislative tool against terrorism is the Criminal Code, which addresses the following offenses: terrorism, association for enemy activity, preparation of terrorist acts, terrorist organization, and international terrorism (Articles 313, 324, 326, 327 394-a, and 419 respectively). The Criminal Code foresees a prison sentence of 4 to 15 years for terrorist actions, depending on their severity, and imprisonment for life for the most egregious ones.<sup>193</sup>

In 2003, constitutional amendments, and in 2004, the Law on Amendments and Addenda to the Law on Criminal Procedure, introduced special investigative measures. These measures can be applied in cases in which the collection of evidence in any other way is difficult. These measures include monitoring communications, entering and searching computer systems, secret surveillance, monitoring, and audio-visual recording of persons.<sup>194</sup> With regard to the prevention of the financing of terrorism the government has adopted the 2004 Law for Prevention of Money Laundering and Other Gains from Criminal Acts, and the 2005 National Strategy on the Fight against Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate. The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Westport, Connecticut—London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 78.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 88–89.

<sup>193</sup> Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER), “Profiles on Counter-Terrorism Capacity ‘The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,’” Council of Europe (December 2006).

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.



In parallel with the newly introduced legislation, FYROM's government has developed an institutional framework for the efficient implementation of the relevant laws. In June 2002, the Interministerial Coordinative Body was created with the aim to coordinate the activities of special organs within the Ministries of Interior, Defense, and Finance (Directorate for Security and Counter-intelligence and Special Forces within the Ministry of Interior; Military Service for Security and Inquisition within the Ministry of Defense; Directorate for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Financial Police within the Ministry of Finance). Moreover, the Public Prosecutor's Office has been established as a state organ in order to prosecute acts of terrorism and criminal acts related to terrorism, which are offenses no longer examined by the national courts.<sup>196</sup>

### **C. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN FYROM**

Religious education has a long history in FYROM, and it is mostly connected with the activities of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC). The MOC has a history of nearly twelve centuries (beginning in 886 A.D.), and it is linked with the education of St. Clement and St. Naum of Ohrid. These saints offered religious and cultural education to Slav Macedonians for three decades. After their deaths, their activities were continued by others, and upon the creation of the autocephalous Ohrid Archbishopric several theological educational institutions functioned in the monasteries. During the Ottoman period, the Orthodox Christian religious and cultural-educational activities fell to a low level, but they were not completely halted.<sup>197</sup> On the contrary, Ottoman Muslim culture flourished, and many architectural masterpieces, such as mosques, bridges, and guest houses (hans) are still in place as proofs of that era's achievements.<sup>198</sup>

After World War II, the People's Republic of Yugoslavia was created, and the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, located in the Vardar area, became one of its sovereign

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<sup>196</sup> Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER), "Profiles on Counter-Terrorism Capacity 'The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,'" Council of Europe (December 2006).

<sup>197</sup> Stefan Kostovski, "Church and State in Macedonia," in Silvio Ferrari and W.Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 207–209.

<sup>198</sup> Andrew Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2008), 56.

states. The Yugoslav Constitution, along with the Constitution of the People's Republic of Macedonia, was adopted in 1946; and it provided regulations regarding religion and the relationship between the federal state and religious communities. According to this Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of conscience and confession for the citizens, religious schools were under the general supervision of the state, and they were free to accept priests as teachers. The state could also provide material support to the religious communities. The 1953 Law on the Legal Status of the Religious Communities of Yugoslavia further elaborated on the above provisions.<sup>199</sup>

In 1974 a new Constitution was adopted by the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. (The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution required that federal states regulate by law their relations with religious communities.) The new Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia provided that “religious communities can only form religious schools for the education of priests and that they can receive material support from the social community.” The 1977 Law on the Legal Status of the Religious Communities in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia provided that “education can be practiced in public rooms in which religious rituals and religious activities also occur.” It also provided that “religious instruction of minors cannot take place during school hours or when the children are engaged in other school activities.”<sup>200</sup>

Until recently, the provisions for ecclesiastical law were determined by the 1991 Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of religion, including public expression. Religious communities and groups are separated from the state and they have the right to establish their own religious schools and charitable institutions.<sup>201</sup> The 1997 Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups further elaborated on the status of religious education and schools. According to Article 8, a religious community is defined as a “voluntary organized non-profit community of adherents of the same denomination.” Article 9 defines a religious group as a “voluntary non-profit organization of believers of

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<sup>199</sup> Stefan Kostovski, “Church and State in Macedonia,” in Silvio Ferrari and W.Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 203.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

the same religious faith, who do not belong to any registered religious community.” According to the 1997 Law, only one religious community from every faith was allowed to be registered in order to represent its believers.<sup>202</sup>

In 1998, the Law was amended by the Constitutional Court, because several articles were unconstitutional. For example, the establishment of private schools, including ones with a religious orientation, was restricted; and parents were prohibited from homeschooling their children. Moreover, the activities of foreign preachers and missionaries were restricted, while foreigners in general were not allowed to conduct religious services without permission, or to provide religious instruction for children under the age of 10 without the permission of their parents.<sup>203</sup>

Until recently, requests for permission to establish a place of worship were either ignored or denied. Mosques were often built without permission, but the government did not act against the Muslim communities. Eventually, a new law emerged with the assistance of the OSCE,<sup>204</sup> and this law became effective on 1 May 2008.<sup>205</sup> The new law removed restrictions on licensing places of worship and allowed religious education in such facilities. Currently there are 470 such places of worship for Muslims, although some of them are still under construction.<sup>206</sup>

Even though religious communities are supposed to provide for their needs from their own incomes, they can be funded by the state under various circumstances. For example, the government has decided to fund the reconstruction of a mosque in the city of Tetovo, which has already commenced. Ministers of faith who come from abroad must apply to a State Commission in order to receive a visa, and they must also provide an

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<sup>202</sup> Stefan Kostovski, “Church and State in Macedonia,” in Silvio Ferrari and W.Cole Durham, Jr, eds., *Law and Religion in Post Communist Europe* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 204–205.

<sup>203</sup> United States Department of State, 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom—Macedonia, 19 September, 2008, found in Web site at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbd1c.html>>.

<sup>204</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Comments on the Draft Law of the Republic of Macedonia: “Law on the Legal Status of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups,” 3 May, 2006, found at Web site: <<http://www.legislationline.org.htm>>.

<sup>205</sup> United States Department of State, 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom—Macedonia, 19 September 2008, found in Web site at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbd1c.html>>.

<sup>206</sup> Maria Koinova, “Muslims of Macedonia,” Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe- Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE), 18.

official invitation from a religious organization.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, religious education for all faiths is optional in the public schools, and it is initiated in the sixth year of primary school. Religious schools can also be established, with the exception of primary education.<sup>208</sup>

Despite the fact that the Law on Education amendments of April 2007 states clearly that religious instruction is not mandatory,<sup>209</sup> the government of FYROM and the Ministry of Education and Science enforced religious instruction in primary education in the 2008/2009 school year. According to this regulation, parents had to choose between two optional subjects—religious instruction or familiarization with religions—for their children to be taught. Religious teachers were offered a one-day training and application period, and the relevant textbooks were not provided on time, resulting in a delay in the start of classes. The government’s decision was criticized by human rights organizations because it is contrary to all relevant domestic and international regulations.<sup>210</sup> As a result, the Constitutional Court of FYROM abolished Article 26 of the Law on Elementary Education (adopted in 2008), according to which “religious instruction can be studied in the primary schools as a subject of personal choice.”<sup>211</sup>

In the post-communist period, the wearing of religious symbols has re-emerged in FYROM’s society, and has been manifest in the wearing of the cross or crucifix by Christians and of the crescent by Muslims. This is also the case with the dress code for students that appeared in 1992. In FYROM, under 3 percent of female students wear Islamic dress.<sup>212</sup> Even though there is no law that forbids the wearing of religious symbols in schools, early in 2009 a high-school principal in Tetovo expelled a female

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<sup>207</sup> United States Department of State, 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom—Macedonia, 19 September, 2008, found in Web site at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbd1c.html>>.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, “Religious Instruction in Schools. A Tool for Better Dialogue or Instigator if Conflicts?”, found in Website at: <<http://www.humanrightshouse.org/noop/file.php?id=10806>>.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Hasan Jashari, “Contemporary Movements and Religion Among Macedonian Albanians,” in Arburim Iseni and Hyreme Gurra, eds., *Academic and Scientific Journal of Linguistics, Literature, Education and Culture*, Is. 1 (June 2008), 172.

student for wearing a headscarf in the classroom according to the school regulations approved by parents. The principal was initially suspended from his duties by Tetovo's mayor and later on reinstated by the State's Education Inspectorate. The latter, even though it recognized that there are no laws prohibiting wearing religious marks in schools, stated that "since the pupils in that particular school are from different ethnicities and religious denominations, the headmaster thought that such an overt display of faith would harm the cohesion of the school, so he acted according to the statute that the parents themselves approved."<sup>213</sup>

The Islamic Community, one of the registered religious communities, has established several secondary schools (madrassas), most famously the "Isa Beg," which provides religious, as well as secular instruction. Thus, Muslim students are able to continue their studies in universities other than the Faculty of Islam, which is an institution for higher education founded by the Islamic community. This institution was established in 1997/1998, and it can provide secondary school graduates with bachelor's degrees. Prior to the foundation of the Islamic faculty, approximately 50 students had to continue their studies in Islamic countries, mainly in the Middle East. Because of the lack of reliable records, the exact percentage of Muslim children who receive a religious education can not be estimated.<sup>214</sup>

The new law was intended to improve the legal status of religious communities, since it has relaxed the process of their registration. Currently there are four Muslim communities in FYROM, namely: (1) the Islamic Community, which is registered by the government and unites mainly the ethnic Albanians; (2) the Islamic Dervish Religious Community, which is also registered by the government and unites mainly the Roma; (3) the Muslim Religious Community, which is not registered, and which unites the ethnic Turks, the Torbeshi, the ethnic Bosnians and some Roma; and (4) the Bektashi

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<sup>213</sup> Anonymous, "Headscarved Pupil Pushes Limits in Macedonia," Macedonian News, February 2009, found in Website at: <[http:// www.vmacedonianews.com/.../headscarved-pupil-pushes-limits-in.html](http://www.vmacedonianews.com/.../headscarved-pupil-pushes-limits-in.html)>.

<sup>214</sup> Maria Koinova, "Muslims of Macedonia," Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe- Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE), 32-33.

Community, which is also not registered and is dominated by ethnic Albanians.<sup>215</sup> Several problems have arisen with regard to the restitution of the religious properties that were expropriated by the former Yugoslav government. Discussions are under way between religious communities and the government over the issue.

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<sup>215</sup> Maria Koinova, "Muslims of Macedonia," Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe- Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE), 35.

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## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite some indicators, such as attendance at weekly Christian services, religion in the twenty-first century is not completely in decline in Europe. Indeed, religion has a renewed importance, notably among Muslims in Europe, at the private level as well as at the national and international levels. Increased religious diversity, misunderstandings about other peoples' faiths, and the creation of negative stereotypes have led to a heightened antagonism, which sometimes is expressed through religious extremism and violence. At the same time religious education teachers consider it imperative that young people know about multiple religions, since lack of knowledge promotes prejudice.<sup>216</sup> In this sense, several European institutions have made efforts to foster education about religions and beliefs in order to facilitate dialogue and understanding among people of different faiths.

### **A. EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

This thesis examines the roles of the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe with regard to religious education.

#### **1. European Union (EU)**

According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the EU recognises the right of people to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This includes the right to manifest religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance (Article 10). Article 14, which is related to education, guarantees (among other freedoms) the freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions, in accordance with the

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<sup>216</sup> Carin Laudrup, "A European Battlefield: Does the EU Have a Soul? Is Religion In or Out of Place in the European Union?," *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 37, Nos. 1/2, (March/ June 2009), 58.



national laws governing the exercise of such freedoms and rights. Furthermore, the members of the EU are committed to respecting cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (Article 22).<sup>217</sup>

Even though freedoms with regard to religion are guaranteed, the EU still remains a secular body with no advocacy of any specific religions in any of its fundamental policy documents. However, the EU acknowledges the significance of the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and accordingly organized several related events in the framework of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (EYID).<sup>218</sup> Among these activities was a seminar held in May 2008 entitled “The Visibility of Religion in the European Public Space: the Question of Worship Places and Religious Symbols in Clothing.” Members of multiple European institutions, NGOs and representatives of the religious communities and the academic world discussed religious pluralism in European societies and the role of religious symbols in the public space. Many participants argued that the language used by religious communities is not comprehensive enough to explain the value of symbols and the contribution of religion in general to the coherence of society. Moreover, with regard to the sensitive issue of mosque building, it was suggested that new architectural approaches that respect environmental standards and create spaces available for all people regardless of conviction constitute a positive measure against intolerance.<sup>219</sup>

In 1995, the Council of the EU adopted a resolution on the Response of Educational Systems to the Problem of Racism. According to this resolution, European Union members should improve their educational systems in order to promote respect for people of all cultural origins. Educational systems should also encourage attitudes of solidarity and tolerance, and promote democratic values and human rights. The measures proposed included the use of educational materials that highlight cultural, ethnic and

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<sup>217</sup> Solemn Proclamation of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,” *Official Journal of the European Communities*, C 364, December 2000.

<sup>218</sup> “Intercultural Dialogue—The Religious Dimension,” An initiative of the European Union, Helsinki, Finland, October 2008.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

religious diversity and that provide a better understanding of the nature of a multicultural society. Moreover, students who are susceptible to racist or xenophobic influences should participate in integration initiatives, such as cooperation among schools.<sup>220</sup>

The EU has launched the Framework 6 Program entitled “Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society,” which sponsors research projects concerning forms of teaching about religions that encourage dialogue and prevent conflict.<sup>221</sup> One of these initiatives is the three year (March 2006-March 2009) REDCo Project: “Religion in Education: Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries?” Eight entities, namely, England, Estonia, France, Germany, Norway, Russia, Spain, and The Netherlands, participated in this qualitative and quantitative research in which young people were questioned regarding their views on religion and religious diversity, as well as on classroom dialogue, interaction and teaching methods.<sup>222</sup>

Among the most significant findings of the research were the following: students experience religious diversity in their social life and in their schools in particular; information about religion is provided mainly by the family, with the school serving only as a secondary source; children of migrants are more likely to consider religion important for their lives; and students believe that knowledge about other religions can contribute to peaceful coexistence.

The REDCo researchers proposed that students experience religious education that encourages understanding and tolerance and that is adapted to their needs as they mature. Learning about religions should be incorporated in subjects other than religious education, such as history, literature, and science. Moreover, students of different faith backgrounds should be encouraged to pursue religious studies at university. With regard

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<sup>220</sup> EU Council Resolution, “Response of Educational Systems to the Problem of Racism,” *Official Journal of the European Communities*, C 312, November 1995.

<sup>221</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools* (Warsaw, Poland: Sungraf, 2007), 27.

<sup>222</sup> REDCo, “Religion in Education: Contribution to Dialogue. Policy Recommendations of the REDCo-Research Project,” found in Web site at: [http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/.../policy\\_rec\\_version\\_c\\_2\\_final\\_20\\_03\\_09.pdf](http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/.../policy_rec_version_c_2_final_20_03_09.pdf)., 2.

to education professionals, it is important that they be well trained in order to be able to make students feel comfortable with their diversity. They should also be prepared to address a plurality of religious topics with the participation of students of all religious or non-religious backgrounds.<sup>223</sup>

## **2. Council of Europe (CoE)**

The CoE is the leading European organization producing legislation with regard to human rights. Freedom of religion or belief is guaranteed by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 9).<sup>224</sup> Moreover, according to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, member states shall take measures in the field of education in order to promote knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority (Article 12).<sup>225</sup> In 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE adopted Recommendation 1720 on Religion and Education, which declared “that the Committee of Ministers [should] encourage the governments of member States to ensure that religious studies are taught at the primary and secondary levels of state education.”<sup>226</sup>

In 2002, the CoE’s Steering Committee for Education (CDED) launched the initiative named “The New Challenge of Intercultural Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe.” The working groups that participated in this project acknowledged that all member states face similar issues in different environments. Accordingly, if they

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<sup>223</sup> REDCo, “Religion in Education: Contribution to Dialogue. Policy Recommendations of the REDCo-Research Project,” found in Web site at: [http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/.../policy\\_rec\\_version\\_c\\_2\\_final\\_20\\_03\\_09.pdf](http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/.../policy_rec_version_c_2_final_20_03_09.pdf), 2.

<sup>224</sup> Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, E.T.S. No. 5, Strasbourg, France, November 1950.

<sup>225</sup> Council of Europe, *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, Strasbourg, France, February 1995.

<sup>226</sup> Council of Europe, *Education and Religion*, Recommendation 1720 of the Parliamentary Assembly, October 2005.

share their experiences with each other, they can benefit from ideas already implemented in practice by other member states, and with this information they can review their current policies.<sup>227</sup>

The discussions and findings of three working groups were incorporated in a book published by the CoE entitled *The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education*. The book argued, among other things, that a distinction should be drawn “between the religious dimension of intercultural education, on the one hand, and the intercultural dimension of religious education on the other.” However, both of these approaches share the same value basis, that is, respect for human rights.<sup>228</sup>

Many of the participants recognised that knowledge about religion is essential in understanding human beings and their cultures, and that the religious dimension can not only be incorporated in religious education, but in other subjects as well.<sup>229</sup> It was also said that countries do not have the same needs with regard to education as a result of their different historical experiences. For example, several states, most of which are former communist countries, do not offer a religious education curriculum, while in other states religious education is a subject per se. It was thus suggested that different strategies for different countries should be investigated. Several other issues, such as the improvement of textbooks and teachers’ education, were discussed.<sup>230</sup>

Following the several discussions, a committee of religious and intercultural education experts appointed by the CDDE cooperated to write a guiding document for teachers, teacher trainers and policy makers. This resulted in the publication of a document entitled *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: a Reference Book for Schools*.<sup>231</sup> One of the key concepts of the book was that transmission of religious and

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<sup>227</sup> Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/ Rec (2008) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education, November 2008, 1.

<sup>228</sup> Council of Europe, *The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education*, Conference Proceedings, Oslo, Norway, 6 to 8 June 2004 (Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publishing, 2004), 8.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> CDDE/ CoE, *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: a Reference Book for Schools* (Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publishing, 2004), 8.

moral values can not be achieved just by incorporating them in a curriculum. This is a long lasting procedure and students should develop such values gradually at a personal level in order for them to have a lasting effect. Moreover, education on religious values should be in accord with human rights, democracy and the rule of law.<sup>232</sup>

The *Reference Book for Schools* suggests that states should create concrete relations with religious communities, some of which have played an important role in shaping the social, moral and political life of their countries. Moreover, educational models should avoid stereotyping and at the same time allow for religious differences to be openly expressed and understood. Accordingly, teaching materials should not contain stereotypes with regard to religions and non-religious convictions. The education about religion can be included in several school subjects such as citizenship education, social studies, and religious education per se. In order to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, governments should consider organizing “exchange programs” between schools with an homogenous student population and schools whose student population is heterogeneous. Governments should also consider decentralizing their educational systems. Local school leaders are more familiar with their students’ cultural background than are national-level leaders. As a result, it is easier for local leaders to define their role with regard to religious diversity.<sup>233</sup>

Another important success of the CoE in the field of intercultural dialogue is the publication of the “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.” Regarding the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue the paper attempts to promote a dialogue between religious communities and public authorities as a means of peacebuilding. It also suggests that religious communities interact with each other, through interreligious dialogue, in order to contribute to a better understanding of their different beliefs and cultures. It is

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<sup>232</sup> Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec (2008) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education, November 2008, 3–4.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 4–6.

also acknowledged that the issue of religious symbols is a sensitive one and that there is a lack of consensus among the member states. As a result, the states are allowed considerable discretion on this issue.<sup>234</sup>

### **3. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

In 2006, the OSCE adopted the Decision on Combating Intolerance and Non-Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding. The OSCE Ministerial Council encouraged the member states to “address the root causes of intolerance and discrimination by encouraging the development of comprehensive domestic education policies and strategies,” and to “promote a greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or beliefs.”<sup>235</sup> Consequently, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) invited several scholars, teachers, policy makers, lawyers, and members of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop a manual with recommendations for teaching about religions and beliefs. Their effort resulted in the publication of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*.<sup>236</sup>

The primary purpose of this manual is to offer assistance to OSCE member states that want to include the study of religions and beliefs in their educational curricula. In order to ensure freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the *Toledo Guiding Principles* establish a framework of human rights and legal issues with regard to the proper implementation of curricula for teaching about religions and beliefs. Accordingly, the *Toledo Guiding Principles* take into account the rights of parents, children, religious communities and minorities.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. “Living Together as Equals in Dignity”* (Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publishing, 2004), 22.

<sup>235</sup> OSCE, “Combating Intolerance and Non-Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding,” Decision No. 13/06 of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Brussels, Belgium (December 2006).

<sup>236</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools* (Warsaw, Poland: Sungraf, 2007), 9–11.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

The *Toledo Guiding Principles* also provide several recommendations on the development of a high-quality curriculum. Educational curricula should be inclusive and sensitive to contemporary historical developments that affect religion and belief issues. They should also be flexible regarding different local exercises of religious practices found in schools. Three different approaches to religious and beliefs education are suggested: the subject-specific approach, according to which some aspects of religious education can be incorporated into art, literature, music, history and philosophy in order to strengthen understanding; the integrated approach, which implies that elements of religious education can be integrated into intercultural education or education for democratic citizenship; and the cross-curricular approach, according to which religious education aspects could be projected through cross-curricular lessons and activities. They could, for example, be associated with human rights education and education about mutual respect and understanding.<sup>238</sup>

The *Toledo Guiding Principles* present also two pedagogical approaches. The first one, the teacher-centred approach, implies that the teacher is the main actor in the educational procedure, since he is the main source of information for the students. This requires the availability of quality teaching materials, and it is of critical importance that the teacher be well-educated in his field of knowledge. The second approach is the student-centred pedagogy, according to which the teacher should be able to properly provide a platform for students to interact with each other. This includes dialogue, debate, research projects (performed in groups when possible), drama and presentations. Students should also be allowed to openly express their own values and beliefs.<sup>239</sup>

Several teachers interviewed in the framework of this OSCE project admitted that they are not properly prepared to deal with the increasing religious diversity they face in their classrooms. Under these circumstances, the *Toledo Guiding Principles* discuss the sensitive issue of teacher training and offer some suggestions. The manual places particular emphasis on pre-service and in-service teacher education. This requires that

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<sup>238</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools* (Warsaw, Poland: Sungraf, 2007), 13, 43–44.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

OSCE member states investigate whether their teacher-training institutions, such as colleges and universities, provide a quality education to future teachers, in order for them to be able to address the religious diversity that they will encounter at schools. Given the fact that developments, with regard to religion, take place at a fast pace, it is essential that teachers always be up to date with them. It is suggested that teacher-training facilities can assess the materials proposed by intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations with experience in the field and adopt some of these materials in order to be able to provide further training on religious education.<sup>240</sup>

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FOUR COUNTRIES CONSIDERED IN THE CASE STUDIES**

The intersection of agents of radical Islamic extremism with young marginalized Muslims could become an explosive mixture in the two western European cases examined in this thesis: Britain and France. Anti-Westernism, along with a perceived absence of binding links with their countries of origin, leads Muslim youths to search for a cultural and religious identity, and they occasionally find their personal answer in neo-fundamentalism. Moreover, the source of this ideology is most readily available in the institutions that correspond to their religious practices, namely the mosques. A comparison of the two case studies shows that France has done less than Britain to accommodate Muslim religious practices and education. However, the policies of both countries seem to be inadequate to deal with the problems of Muslim radicalization and terrorist recruitment.

The Balkan states under examination are considered potential havens for terrorist networks because of the presence of significant Muslim populations and their geographical proximity to Islamic countries that have already experienced Islamic extremist actions. Both countries—Albania and FYROM—recently revised their laws concerning religious freedom, but these laws still do not provide enough support for the religious education of Muslims. This thesis suggests that taking bold measures to support

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<sup>240</sup> OSCE/ ODIHR, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools* (Warsaw, Poland: Sungraf, 2007), 57–58.



the religious education of Muslims could prevent—or at least limit—access to radical ideas and promote support for more moderate forms of Islam.

Government schools in the United Kingdom, as mentioned previously, have included civic integration classes. This is consistent with the integrated approach suggested by the *Toledo Guiding Principles*, according to which religious education elements can be incorporated into civic education courses. It is also a valuable first step in promoting understanding of diversity in identities between people of different origins and faiths, and it may help to break down the cultural divide between Muslims and the rest of British society.

However, the Education Reform Act of 1988 (confirmed by the Education Acts of 1996 and 1998) clearly states that religious education must be provided for all registered students in government-maintained schools. Currently only a few schools fail to meet this requirement, but the standards on the provision of religious education are only at an average level. This is probably because several Local Education Authorities (LEA) can not provide effective curriculum planning and assessment.<sup>241</sup> In regard to these issues, the British Ministry of Education should provide the means (religious education teachers and materials) in order for the remaining schools to incorporate a religious education curriculum. At the same time, the LEA should reevaluate their assessment strategies in order to be able to effectively measure the impact of religious education on students, perhaps through polling of a sample of the students. Consequently, they will be able to introduce the proper changes in the locally agreed syllabuses, thus improving the provision of religious education.

It has been reported that religious education has been taught by non-specialists in Britain. Moreover, there are not enough religious education teachers in Britain to cover the needed positions in secondary schools.<sup>242</sup> British authorities should take into account the *Toledo Guiding Principles* with regard to pre-service and in-service teaching education. The Ministry of Education should establish more religious education teaching

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<sup>241</sup> Ofsted, “Making Sense of Religion. A Report on Religious Education in Schools and the Impact of Locally Agreed Syllabuses,” London, UK, June 2007, 5.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 23.

programs (e.g., at colleges and universities) and re-evaluate the quality of teacher-training in existing programs. Moreover, as the REDCo proposed, students of different faith backgrounds should be encouraged to pursue religious studies at university, so that they can effectively meet the requirement for religious education teachers.

As mentioned above, in France and Albania government religious education is not allowed at all. In 2001, however, the French Minister of Education at that time, Jack Lang, invited Régis Debray to make an assessment of the current situation with regard to the potential provision of religious education and provide recommendations as to how to alter the situation. Debray suggested that teaching about religions could be incorporated in other subjects, such as history and philosophy. He further proposed the establishment of an institute of “sciences of religion” able to provide initial and in-service education to religious education teachers. This latter recommendation became a reality with the foundation of the European Institute of Religious Science in 2002. This institution is currently preparing relevant courses for teachers.<sup>243</sup>

Debray’s recommendations are consistent with those of the EU, the CoE, and the OSCE. This thesis suggests that the French Ministry of Education continue these initiatives, and at the same time take into account the rest of the recommendations reviewed above in order to effectively incorporate religious education in a subject-specific approach.

The Albanian government might find it consistent with the national interest to re-examine its decision not to provide any religious education. Since Albania is a member state of the CoE, it should respect the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, according to which states shall take measures in the field of education in order to promote knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority. Albania is also a participating state in the OSCE and aspires to EU membership. Incorporating teaching about religions in its educational system could potentially be considered a positive step towards meeting the necessary standards for membership in the EU. The general principles on how to

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<sup>243</sup> Peter Schreiner, “Religious Education in Europe,” Oslo University, 8 September 2005, at: <<http://resources.eun.org/etwinning/europa2.pdf>> 8.

establish an effective religious education curriculum already exist. The Albanian Ministry of Education could create a special committee to examine which of these recommendations could positively serve its educational system in light of Albanian historical experiences.

In FYROM, religious instruction is optional, while the country's biggest religious communities, both Orthodox and Muslims, have agreed to include units on other faiths in religion classes and to promote religious tolerance. It has already become a tradition to exchange teachers between the Orthodox theological faculty and the Islamic faculty, with students showing a great interest in lectures about the other faith. This fact suggests that offering religion classes that would teach the principles of other faiths, including Islam, could be a bold step in providing an identity to young Muslims receptive to a moderate form of Islam. Since religious education is a subject per se (even though optional) in FYROM's educational system, the Ministry of Education could further improve teaching about religions by providing higher quality pre-service and in-service instruction to religious education teachers.

Concerning the public funding of Islamic schools, there had been considerable obstacles in the United Kingdom in the past. Catholic, Anglican and Jewish schools were supported financially, while Islamic schools were not. Since 1997, however, the government has provided funds for religious public schools of all faiths. Today 98 Islamic schools are functioning in the United Kingdom. It is estimated that 100,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 attend the madrassas, and they typically attend for two hours after school each day.<sup>244</sup>

In France, in contrast, even though state funding of supplementary schools is provided, the preliminary conditions in order for these funds to be granted are virtually impossible to fulfill. Some observers argue that France's policy should be changed to provide economic support with much more moderate criteria than the existing conditions.

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<sup>244</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, "Preventing violent extremism-Winning hearts and minds," *Communities and Local Government Publications*, April 2007.

In Albania, the public funding of religious schools is prohibited. As a result, most Islamic schools function at a sub-optimal level, while young Muslims who wish to pursue an undergraduate education study abroad. The Albanian government might find it advantageous to consider changing the strict secular provisions concerning public funding of religious schools.

In FYROM, religious communities are allowed by law to be funded by the state in special circumstances. Islamic educational institutions have been functioning much more effectively in FYROM than in Albania, so the Skopje government might well choose to support them financially and cooperate with the communities in order to have influence in creating a curriculum that would promote religious tolerance.

All four of the countries examined in this thesis, besides funding religious instruction in public schools, might also consider establishing special committees with the objective of assessing the quality of the provision of religious education. Governments might also encourage teachers of religions and beliefs to participate in pre-service and in-service teacher-training programs.

The building of mosques in the United Kingdom has not been a matter of controversy, in contrast with the French case. Local opposition has been a serious obstacle to mosque construction in France. The French authorities could work in a more productive way on this issue in consultation with the existing Muslim councils, including the French Council for the Muslim Religion (CFCM) and other regional Muslim representatives.

In both the Balkan cases, the building or reconstruction of mosques is currently allowed. However, in Albania the absence of public funding of places of worship has resulted in foreign Islamic organizations taking control. In both Albania and FYROM, the government would be well-advised to consider promoting the restitution of religious properties in order to help the religious communities build their churches and mosques without external intervention.

All four of the countries examined in this thesis could find it advantageous to investigate the possibility of building mosques with spaces available for non-Muslims in order to promote tolerance, as suggested in a seminar conducted under the auspices of the EU.<sup>245</sup>

In both the British and French cases, the clerics who run the mosques are often foreigners with little or no knowledge of the local languages and without any familiarity with the indigenous societies. Founding institutions for educating religious preachers and teachers (both in government and religious schools) may be the proper solution to avoid dependence on foreigners who may have been educated with fundamentalist or even extremist principles of Islam. Governmental authorities could find it beneficial to consult with official Muslim associations or even with the authorities of the countries that their Muslim immigrants have come from, in order to determine what the educational requirements would be for a moderate imam or teacher. The imams and teachers would preferably be born and educated in Europe so that they will have a greater affiliation with European societies.

As noted above, in Albania, Muslim students who want to pursue a higher religious education end up studying abroad. The Albanian government might therefore consider assisting the Islamic community in founding an Islamic university. The fact that an Islamic faculty already exists in FYROM has discouraged an influx of foreign preachers and teachers in mosques and schools.

Given the prospect that the two Balkan States under consideration in this thesis—Albania and FYROM—might become members of the European Union, the issue of religious education has international as well as national implications. The development of a common anti-terrorist strategy, including preventive measures such as moderate religious education, should be seriously considered in the framework of the European Union's policies. The EU's current initiatives are still at a research rather than an implementation level. In contrast, the CoE has always been more sensitive to issues

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<sup>245</sup> "Intercultural Dialogue—The Religious Dimension," An initiative of the European Union, Helsinki, Finland, October 2008.

regarding human rights and education. An adoption of the CoE's principles in the EU's decision making would be a positive step in producing legislation relevant to preventing Islamic extremism.

All the possible measures discussed above are meant to prevent the circulation of radical ideas and to promote support for moderate forms of Islam that do not include violence as a means of expressing Muslim identity. Such measures could be a significant part of the set of policies required to prevent and counter terrorism.

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